

Brant & Devon



Marion Lee Reynolds



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GERAINT OF DEVON

BY

MARION LEE REYNOLDS



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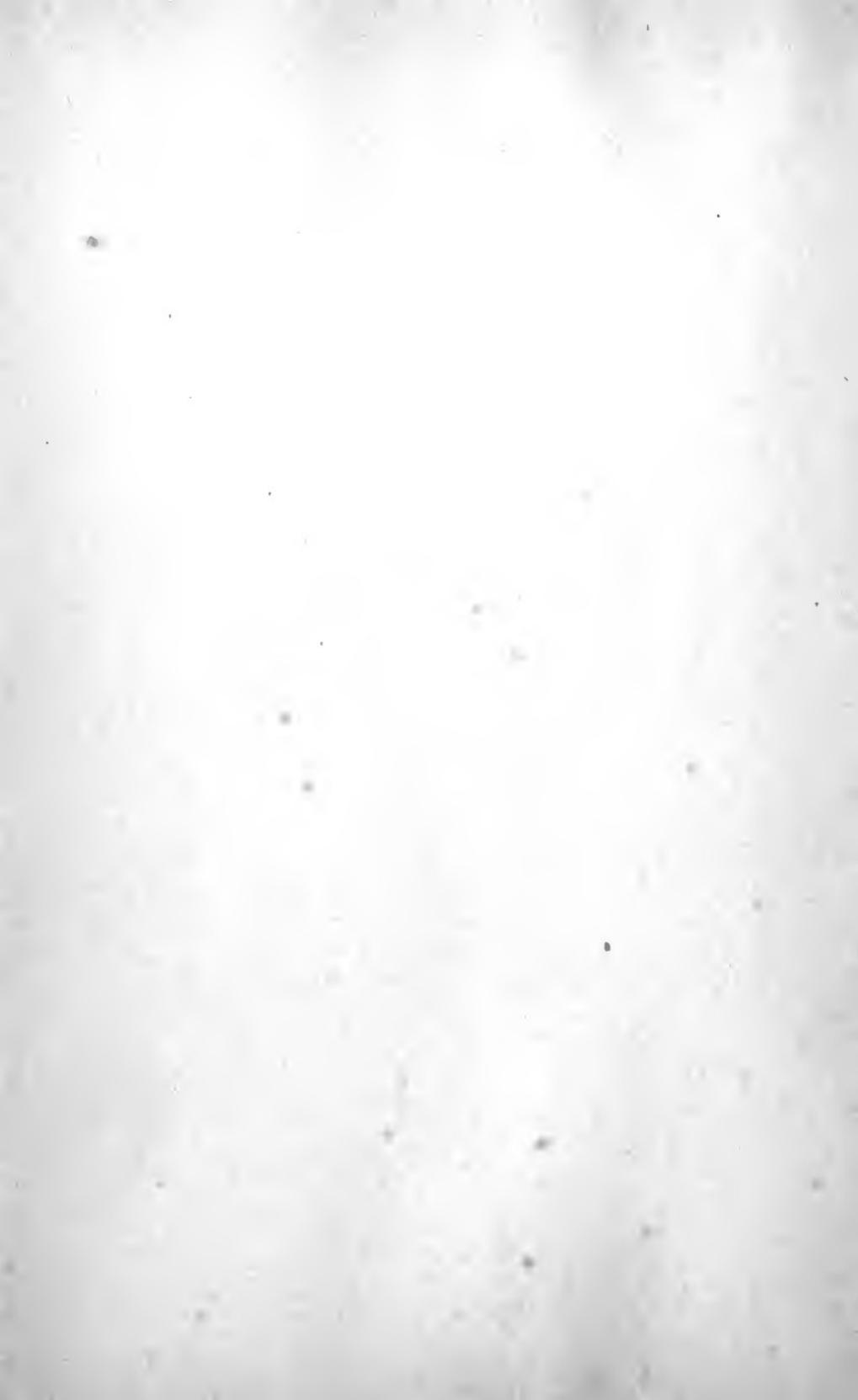
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J. B. F. R.

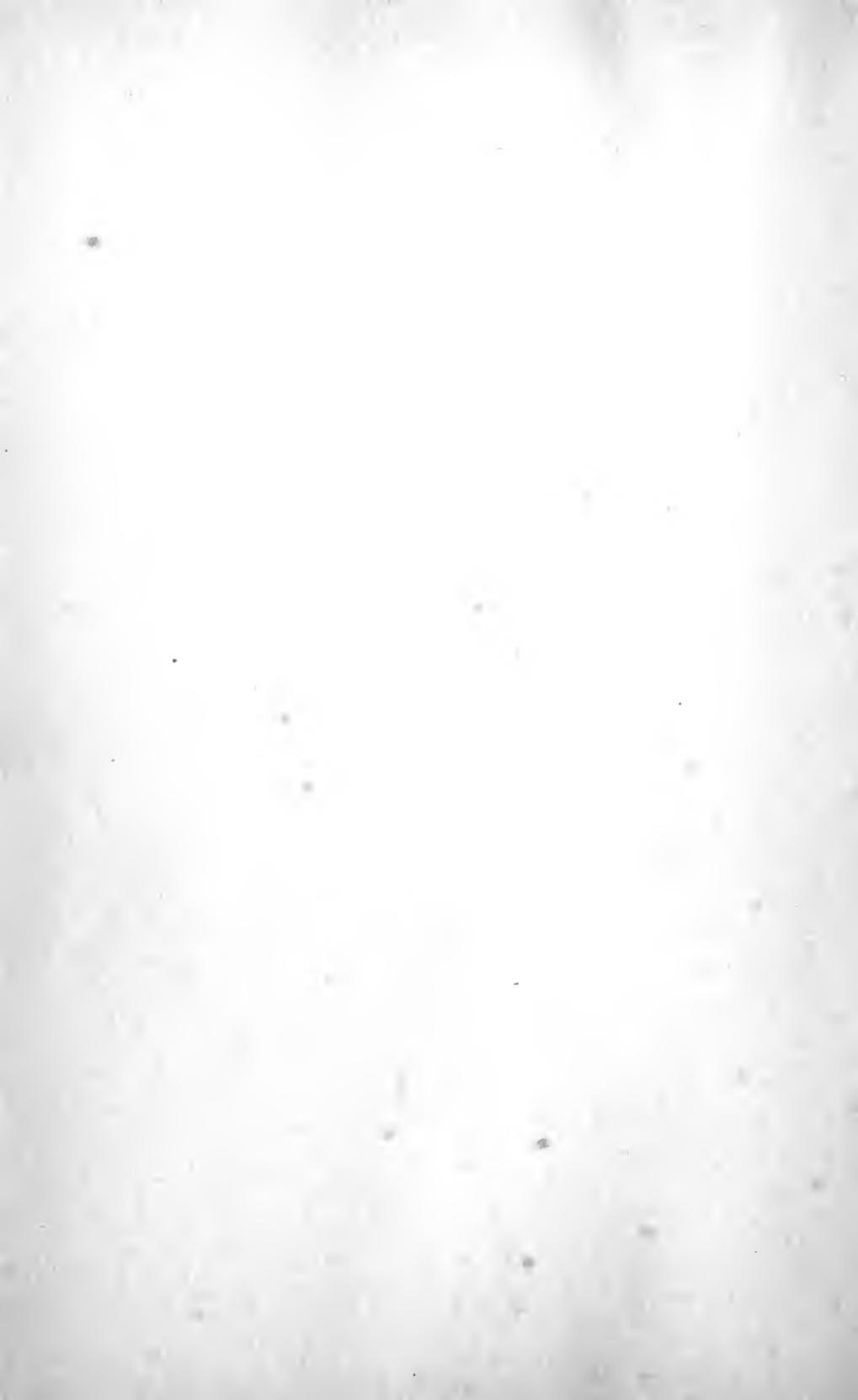


FOREWORD

Gentles, I will to tell you a fair tale,
Echoing from the Lands of Long Ago,
Resonant to the Towers of Brave Romance —
Romance, that stately region of old time,
Wherein were truths in grand simplicities,
Valiance and gentleness and constancy,
And Beauty with a radiance on her brow,
And Love, a spiritual lord through earthly life,
Source of ideals past all attainment, high.

Luminous yet within a dreamer's dream
Those lands endure; and if, as folk will say,
They never were save in a dreamer's dream,
What matter, when their light is glamour still,
Their songs, a living music in the heart,
Their visions, our own visions, glorified?
And when, as to a refuge, to their halls,
From deserts of world-weariness and pain,
Fleeing, the dreamer enters and finds peace?

So do you put the shadows from *your* souls,
Coming within the gates of Brave Romance.



THE WINNING OF ENID



I

ONCE it befell, upon a Whitsuntide,
Arthur, the lord puissant, held his court
At old Caerleon, whose innumerable towers
And labyrinthine palaces that still
Renewed them in the broadening stream of Usk
(Two cities, whereof either well might seem
The more unreal, so near to Faerie, both),
Were ancient even then. For alien hands
Upreared them long ago, and alien tongues
Spake through their silences, and alien loves
Hallowed them with their presence; till the
doom,

Down-hurtling from the wildness of the north,
Drove all in rout and ruin from the land,
And once again, the princes of the isle
Held sovereignty within Caerleon's halls,
True sons of Britain, conquerors at the last.

Great was the court of Arthur, which he held
In that young month of May. The noblest
knights
Of all the baronage, with their fair wives
And daughters, were assembled; and nine kings
Were thither come, from nine wide-spreading
realms.

Throughout the Island of the Mighty — each
In his demesne was paramount; yet they all
Had homage done to Arthur, King of kings.

It was Whit-Tuesday night. The spacious hall
Of banquet was ablaze with streaming flames
Of torches in tall cressets wrought from gold,
Of swinging golden lamps, the burning oils
Whereof exhaled a cloud of spicery,
Drifting like gossamer. And sweet the scent
Of rushes and bruised blossoms on the floor,
And bright the silver vessels and the gold,
And the jewel-heavy hanaps, with the wine
Darkling and glowing ruddily like a jewel.
For Arthur and that fellowship which formed
A symbol of the roundness of the world,
A symbol of the circling wheel of time,
A symbol of the ringed eternities —
The Knighthood of the mystic Table Round —
Held joyous festival; their revelry
Rang to the shadowy rafters, so the flags,
Suspended thence, rustled with silken swish,—
Some, new, unstainéd, colourful and gay,
Some, torn and tattered, maculate with blood;
Some, Arthur's and his princes', but the most,
Wrested from ruined kings on days of blood.

Presently from the daïs, satin-spread,
Where sat Pendragon's son and Guenevere,

His Queen of regal loveliness, on thrones
Carven of cypress-wood, arose the sound
Of harp-strings touched to music. And a
youth,
Slender, dark-eyed, was he who smote the
strings,
Alarin named, of whom strange rumors were.
For some men whispered he was elfin-born,
Child of a faery mother, though earthly man,
A good knight and a famous, fathered him.
And folk told ever that the harp he played
Was Taliessin's own, that he had sipped
The cauldron of Cardwen,— ay, had heard
Rhiannon's singing-birds. They said he knew
What song the willow whispers to the stream
When, in the eastern dark, the red moon hangs;
What chant the veiled spirits of the storm
Lift in the hollow intervals of wind;
What dirge the daughters of the towering wave
Intone for drowned men when the sullen surge
Booms loudest on the cliffs of Britain's shore.
Tales, foolish tales, perchance; but this is sure:
Well could he harp, well could he make the lay,
And sitting on the step to Arthur's throne,
He sang the love of Astrild and Locrynn,
And their love-dolour, with a little song
He called The King's Farewell, and it was this:

“ Before me is a gathering of spears,

Before me is the frothing flood of Stour,—
Behind me is delight through seven years.

“ Dear, on this day in battle I shall die;
What will they do to thee when I am slain?
What will they say to thee when mute I lie?

“ If they cry, ‘ Sin,’ remember Love is great;
If they jeer, ‘ Shame,’ remember Love is lord;
To live in him is no dishonoured state.

“ And if they bring thee to the two-edged sword,
Be not quite comfortless amidst their hate,—
‘ We loved so very well’ be thy last word.

“ O face, for love of me so grey with pain
To see thee but once more how glad were I!
The haven of thy smile but once to gain! —

“ Dear, it is come! The trumpets shrill the hour!
Behind me is delight through seven years,—
Before me is the frothing flood of Stour.”

Then they who held such joyance in the hall,
When he had sung, were silent a brief space,
Thinking of those two lovers of old time.
And in the heart of Guenevere was a woe.
For never could word or song be made of love,
But she must think of Lancelot, and the days
To be, of waste and rasure — menacing days,
Certain past all prevention.

But behold,

The dragon-sculptured doors at the hall's end
Opening with a rush of cool night air,
Scented with May, a youth in hunting-green,
Entered, and bent the knee at Arthur's throne,
And told how in the royal Wood of Dean,
Wherein was he a forester, had appeared
A wonderful white stag, than one night's snow
On yesterday's green field, whiter by far.
And Arthur bade a hunting be proclaimed
Even for the morrow's dawning, and when the

Queen

Sought his permission to attend the chase,
Accorded it willingly.

So when the dawn

Glimmered through court and hall, Arthur
arose,

And all his nobles, and young pages deft
Arrayed them for the hunt ; and joyously,
While yet the Severn-mists lay in the south,
With tuneful winding of gay hunting-horns,
With deep-voiced baying of lithe, leashéd
hounds,

Champing of coursers, ring of golden spurs,
They galloped forth unto the Wood of Dean.

But in her silken chamber, Guenevere
Slept still, rapt deep in dreams. So grew the
day,

And through the painted casements of the room,
The sunlight filtered, coloured violet,
Green, vermeil, azure ; and one slender shaft,
Slantingly golden, streaming on the bed's
Fine ivory and white cypress, crept upon
The purple counterpane, whose broidered kings
Glanted to life. And higher stole the beam
Among the golden arabesques and flowers —
Wrought by sweet ladies, fair and long since
dead —

Until it lay like something magical
On the sleeping Queen's white throat,— a touch
so soft

And warm that in her dream the sleeper smiled ;
And gliding even higher, fell at last
Full on her eyelids. Guenevere awoke
To marvel at the lateness of the hour,
And summon her maidens. Swiftly was she
robed

In folds of emerald samite, girdled close
With a broad belt of gold, mantle and hood
Of crimson, sewn with gems, and lined throughout

With sendal, white and fine. So, freshly fair
As a spring rose first blossomed with the morn,
She mounted her fleet palfrey, and in haste,
With two white-breasted greyhounds, freed from
leash,

Darting like swallows to her right and left,

With but a single damsel in attend,
Rode from Caerleon's gateway, forded Usk,
And followed the broad trail of trodden grass
Left by the huntsmen.

As the Queen approached
The confines of the forest, the sharp beat
Of hoofs rang out behind her, and she turned,
And following on a hunter foal of bay,
Stately and proud, she saw a knightly youth
Who drew near swiftly, and a prince was he
In comeliness and bearing, tall and straight,
Fair-haired, grey-eyed. And gaily was he clad
In lustrous, yellow satins, deeply bright
As with a woven sunshine; at his thigh
A golden-hilted sword hung in a sheath
Of patterned cordovan; of ivory
His hunting-horn was carved and wrought with
gold,
And from his shoulders floated on the breeze
A scarf of purple silk, the corners caught,
Each, with a golden apple.

And the youth
Riding unto the Queen, saluted her,
Whereto she answered smilingly: "So late,
My lord Geraint, thou comest, even as I!
By this hour will the chase be well advanced,
And if we go to yonder rise of ground,

Which overlooks the forest, we shall hear,
Plainly, I think, the chime of hound and horn,
And mayhap see the passing of the hunt.”
And they rode up the knoll and waited there.

But while they hearkened to the far-off shouts
Of huntsmen, and the crying of the dogs,
And the thin, distance-broken bugle-calls,
Lo, mounted on a hackney, from the wood
A frightful dwarf came riding, in one hand
Holding a knotted scourge. Behind the dwarf,
Upon a palfrey, white and spirited,
Rode a fair woman gowned in gold brocade,
And following her, upon a huge destrier,
A mail-clad knight was seen, his lance in rest,
Slung from his neck a massive, dark-red shield,
Bearing a silver griffon. And the knight
Was of so mighty a stature that few men
Could equal him in body, and his mien
Was resolute, and in his countenance
A pride illimitable was manifest;
And manifest, strong passions gratified
Too easily and too recklessly, by a force
Of character powerful but gone astray,
That so his youthfulness and comeliness
Were well-nigh devastate.

Lightly the three
Approached the hillock, and Queen Guenevere

Much marveled at the great size of the knight,
And she said to Geraint, "Who is yon man?"
"I know not," he made answer. Then the
Queen

Addressed her damsel, telling her to go
And of the dwarf enquire his master's name.
This did she do with all of courtesy,
Adding, "It is our gracious Queen who asks,
Speaking through me." Whereat the hideous
dwarf

Twisted his wide mouth to an evil grin,
But said no word. Thereon the maiden turned
Her horse's head towards the knight himself,
Thinking to speak with him, but instantly
The dwarf struck with his scourge, and though
in time

She flung her arm up to protect her face,
The blow fell full upon her gloveless hand,
Making great, livid bruises, and she came
Moaning to Guenevere.

Then sorrowfully
And wrathfully said Geraint: "Pity of God!
That he should strike her thus, and that the
knight

Make not a move to punish him! I will go,
Myself, and ask the name." And he rode forth,
And sternly charged the dwarf discover it,

But mockingly was he answered, "My lord's name

I will not tell to one of thy degree!"

Then Geraint turned his horse towards the knight,

But the dwarf screamed, "Thou shalt not speak with him!"

And he raised high the scourge and smote Geraint

Hard on the neck that all the flesh was bruised
And striped of the scourge-lashes. And Geraint

Put hand to hilt, minded to slay the dwarf
In just avengement, but bethought him swift
It were poor vengeance but to slay the slave,
Punishing not the master; and unarmed,
How match his silken coat with the knight's mail?

So he resheathed his sword and galloped back
To take leave of the Queen.

"Grieve not, my prince,"
Said Guenevere, "thine was the worthier way.
Blind rage had not been valour." But Geraint,
The slow blood oozing darkly from the wounds
And colouring the purple scarf he ware,
Responded: "Lady, I crave thy sovran leave
To follow yon knight of the griffon-shield,
Whose pride I measure by his monster's words,

Wherever he may go, until perchance,
For pledge or loan, I may procure me arms
And challenge him, and in his blood blot out
The insult he hath suffered to be placed
Upon thy dignity, thy maid and me."

"Go!" said the Queen, "But, cousin, guard
thyself;

For truly there is not a goodlier knight
Than thou in all the court — ay, in the land —
Nor one more dear to Arthur. And return
In all the haste thou canst." "I shall return
When we are well avenged. Lady, farewell!"
And clapping golden spurs to his bay steed,
He flashed away down the sun-flooded road,
Where, in the farther distance, went the dwarf,
The lady, and the knight.

And with one hand
Shading her eyes against the sun, the Queen
Kept watch, until a winding of the way
Hid him from view. Then, careless of the hunt,
She called her hounds, and musingly and slow,
To old Caerleon's palace came again.

II

ALL through that day the company of three
Unrestingly rode onward, and Geraint,
Persistent as their shadows, followed still.
Often they journeyed in broad forest-lands,
Deep, cool, and very grateful; and sometimes
Across wide meadows, where the flower-starred
 grass

Billedow before the breeze; and yet again
By fields of tillage, where the peasant-folk
Gaped after them, awe-stricken, telling tales,
Either to other, of the wondrous court
Now at Caerleon met, and of the King.
By broad highway, and now by bridle-path,
But ever on and onward did they fare,
Till, in the falling dusk, Geraint beheld
Pale, clustered lights before him, and rejoiced,
Thinking to find a hamlet there, and arms;
But found instead a priory, nestled close
Against the foremost of a range of hills.
Thereinto passed the company of three,
And lodged them; and therein passed Prince
 Geraint,
And had right courteous treatment, but of arms
Were none within the house of quiet life.
And in the dawning, from the priory,

Went forth the dwarf, the lady, and the knight,
And Geraint followed them.

This second day

They journeyed in the shadow of the hills,
Between whose giant folds the dust-wan road
Turned and re-turned, like a wild, hunted thing,
Twisting and winding, doubling on itself,
But fleeing ever onward. So Geraint,
Watching the sun slope down the western sky
And the hills grow in umbre, thought the quest
Had never end, and many times desired
His own green shield of eagle-blazonry,
His own good lance and hauberk. And his mind
Was filled with fancies touching on the three
Who rode before him, and he saw the dwarf
Turn once and gaze upon him and fall back
As he would speak with him, but haughtily
The master, interposing, signed him go
To his place in the forefront. But at length,
After a toilsome climb to a sharp height,
The prince saw that which gladdened him,— a
vale,
Extending beyond eye-cast, fair and wide,
Of various verdancy, the eastern slope
Immersed in sunshine, while the western half
Already gloomed in shadow. A rich town
Lay in the valley, with long, glistening streets,
And red-roofed houses, gabled and matchecold;

And at the town's extremity, on a crest
Commanding all the country, rose the towers
And bastions of a fortress, all agleam
With the strong sunlight splintering on the
blades
And steely helmets of the men-at-arms
Who thronged the walls.

Seeing all this, Geraint
Thought he had never seen a fairer town,
Richer or nobler, to whatever lord
It might belong; so thinking, took his way
Adown the rocky hill-fall, following fast
His quarry through the open city-gates,
And up the thoroughfare. Filled was the street
With a great press of people — knights in mail,
Ladies with hawk on wrist, stout serving-men,
Pages with messages. Allwhere was heard
Clangor of iron, and ring of tempered steel,
Blast of the bellows, hammering at the forge,
Hissing of red-hot metal; at every door
Horses were shod, swords burnished, armour
washed,
In bustling preparation. But all ceased
Their labor or their pleasure, when the knight,
With lady and dwarf, rode up the teeming
street;
And all gave place before him, and with shouts
Of greeting and adulation welcomed him —

Some with “ All hail! ” and some with “ Welcome, lord! ”

While others cried, “ What knight is like to thee,
Knight of the Sparrow-hawk? ” Thus he progressed,

As with a conqueror’s triumph, the full length
Of that long street, and conqueror-like, his
mien,

Lordly and orgulous, and passed anon

With his companions through the massive gates
Of that high fortress, whence, above the crash
Of ponderous bolts to-driven heavily,

Thundered the warders’ welcome, “ Hail! All
hail! ”

Whereat Geraint, standing a little way
Apart, with satisfaction sighed and thought:
“ So! This is very well! At last I trail
Yon insolent to his hold! ” Then turned to
seek

Some lodgment for the night, but everywhere
Found only crowded inns, and hostelries
Already overflowing, and no one,
For charity or gold, would harbour him;
And when he asked the reason — what had
drawn

The entire country-side into the town —
Men looked at him in wonder and exclaimed:

“ Hear what he asks ! Fair sir, what should it
be
Saving the Sparrow-hawk ? ” Wherefore the
prince,
With something of wrath for their courtesy,
But more of scorn, and with much weariness
From his long ride, turned from the populous
ways
And districts of the city, letting his horse
Choose his own way, not knowing where he went,
Not caring, where all was strange ; and by a
lane,
Sideling and unfrequented, chanced to come
To the deserted outskirts.

There he saw
A brook in a deep gorge, whose sloping banks,
Long left attentionless, were overgrown
With coarse, luxuriant weeds ; and the loose soil
Had slid in many places, so it lay
Almost athwart the channel, that the stream,
With low, complainful murmur, frothily
Poured through the cramping passage, to lose
itself
Among the tufted beds of water-grass,
Sharp-bladed, rankly growing. A bridge
spanned
The narrow slake ; of finest marble-stone
Had it been builded, but the frost and heat

Of years had wrought a change,— seamed,
cracked it was,
Dark-blottedched with spongy moss.

A ruined hall
Stood on the farther side,— one great square
tower
With four outflanking turrets. But of these,
Two had been crumbled in an ancient war,
And lay two heaps of mortar and of stone,
Rounded with wash of rain and drift of sand;
A third was roofless, and its parapet
Tottered in mouldering sections; and but one
Seemed serviceable still, like the main tower
Grey with grey lichens, scarred with old as-
saults,
And blackened with the smoke of battles done.
Yet Prince Geraint, letting his gaze traverse
From sunken roof to sunken corner-stone,
Mused how a potent charm enveloped all,
Though ruinous,— yea, even thought perchance
The ruin in its ruin held the charm—
That unreal, veil-like beauty which the past
Weaves of its phantoms, with fair, phantom
hands
Its monuments overspreading — a dim cloud,
Intangible and golden, tenuous
And light and subtle, with the sunset-glow,
Redly behind ; as now, behind the hall,

The west was red, while, in the evening breeze,
The dark-green banners of the ivy, flung
Like pennons of proud warriors from the
breached
And broken battlements, waved wide their folds
In sinuous triumph; honeysuckle-sprays,
White-yellow with new bloom, dripped from the
eaves,
And from the matted, interlacing screen
Of twisted, gnarled branches, came the soft,
Low, slumberous, half-querulous twittering
Of sleepy swallows.

Dreamful was the scene,
With such a mellow restfulness suffused,
Of such a calm simplicity, that the prince,
With the dusk's fragrant fingers at his heart,
Forgot the wreckage of the fallen towers,
Forgot the waste of fire and battering-ram,
Forgot all save the swaying ivy-boughs,
The gilding of the sunset, and the small,
Sleep-quavering bird-notes. "Surely here is
peace,"
Thought Prince Geraint, and that he spake
aloud
Knew not, until in bitter echoing,
A voice close to him answered, "Surely, peace!
Peace red with ruin, with foul deeds defouled!
Not peace of honour and security,

But peace of ravishment and injury —
Such peace as the sword leaves and the strong
hand —
The peace of desolation! ”

Then Geraint,

Roused from his waking dream, beheld how one
Had come the lane behind him, and now stood
Upon the bridge. A man of many years
He seemed, but something worse than flight of
time
Had aged him all too quickly, brought the stoop
To his once stately figure, and the white
To his loose, heavy hair. And poorly clad
He was in an old, faded satin robe,
Much-mended. Yet, despite his mean array,
An air of gentle birth distinguished him;
Upon him was the dignity of rank,
Inbred and ineffaceable. And he looked
Now at the ruined hall, now at Geraint,
And smiled with a great bitterness, and he said:
“ Behold, my lord, the earldom of an earl —
Ivy and fallen towers and tottering walls! —
And even these on sufferance! ” And the prince
Was stirred with a strong pity for this man,
And knew not what to do nor what to say
To lighten his despair. But presently,
In a changed tone, the other spake again:
“ And yet, fair youth, if lodging thou hast none,

Come, lodge with me to-night. If poor the cheer,
Full hearty is the welcoming, at least.
My name is Lyconal; men call me earl;
And earl I was in sooth, upon a time.”
“ My lord,” replied Geraint, “ I give thee
thanks;
Most gladly will I come.”

Whereat the earl
Conducted him across the mouldering bridge,
Up a steep path, into a small, square court,
Between whose sunken flags the wild grass grew;
While everywhere the ancient walls of stone
Seemed soft as velvet in their tapestry
Of all-concealing ivy. Here the prince
Unsaddled his spent horse. Then suddenly,
Ere he could follow where his host would lead,
Down through the silence, from the upper hall,
A maiden sang, and marvelous her voice!
So sweet, that floating downward from above
So clearly sweet, it seemed an elfin strain
From out the coloured splendors of the west —
A music from the sunset, disembodied,
Pure melody — the full, high, soaring notes
Sprung from the fieriest auréolin
That tipped the deepening crimson of the
clouds;
The low, rich tones from the slow-shadowing
dusk’s

Flower-scented violet. And still Geraint
Thought ever, "Is it faery? Is it real?
Oh, never voice so magical were real!"
And all the wonder shone within his eyes.
Earl Lyconal, with understanding smile,
Waited in kindly patience, whispering,
"My daughter, Enid."

The song Enid sang
Was an old, whimsical, half-magic rhyme
Anent the Summer-fountain, and the fay
Who knelt thereby with death between her lips:

" There is a fount in faery lands
Where stream of summer hath its rise;
A maiden, not with mortal eyes,
Kneels by the fountain, with both hands
Clasping a windflower-twinéd cup,
Wherewith she dips the summer up.

" A knight spurred out of the wide wood;
The sun glanced on his falchion bright,
And on his surcoat, all bedight
With broidered Grails, since for the Good

" He labored, nor must stop nor stay
From winning ever on the Quest
Whose sweet sign glimmered on his breast —
He saw the maiden by the way.

" He caught the gold glint of her hair,
He saw the white curve of her throat;

And all her slenderness did note;
And how the summer bubbled there

“ Over her glistening finger-tips,—
 And like a spirit, died unshiven,
 Had he ten souls, he must have given
Them all, but once to touch her lips!

“ He felt the heart within him shrink
 At the long clinging of her kiss;
 He knew that very surely this
Was death, yet only could he think

“ How, sweeter still, her mouth was sweet
 Past all belief, and none could tell
 The glamour of her face — and fell
Among the flowerets at her feet.

“ She gave him neither look nor smile,
 She gave him neither smile nor sigh;
 Nor ever paled to see him die,
Nor ever glanced at him, the while
She knelt, with windflower-twinéd cup,
Dipping the stream of summer up.”

So ceased the song; yet still the music seemed
To ripple in long waves across the court,
As water ripples, when the willow drops
A leaf in the still pool. And Prince Geraint,
Half-saddened by the fancy of the lay,
Wherein Love’s sum was Death, but all the more
Desirous of the sight of her who sang,

Signed to his host, who wordless, led him
straight,
In the still-singing silence, through the hall's
Dark, unused, lower chamber, up a stair
Built in the thickness of the masonry,
Into the upper hall.

Two women sat

Therein at broidery-frames. And like the
earl's,
Their garb was ancient satin, lusterless,
Thin-worn and frayed. Of these twain, one was
old,
And like the satin, faded; yet the prince,
Marking the strength, the high serenity,
The perfectness of peace on the old face,
Whereto much suffering, met with fortitude,
Had given a pale glory, like a saint's
Dim, lambent aureole, thought in her youth
She must have been the fairest woman known,
The stateliest. And one was but a maid,
Gold-haired, brown-eyed, the colour in her cheek
Soft like the sunset-colour, and her brow
And throat and fingers white as lily-flowers
Sprayed by a crystal fountain.

And Geraint

Bethought him of the fair of olden days;
Those ladies, whose bright presences lend charm
And witchery all-potent to the past;

Those ladies, delicately belle and young,
Young always and belle always, in despite
Of Death's dry grasp and Time's too restless
sand,

Whose beauty can not die, nor age, nor wane
Below perfection ; crowned with amaranths,
Their luminous faces, shining stilly-fair
In circumambient darkness, draw for aye
Our dreaming and our longing to a time
Not in reality more grand than ours,
Perchance, but in its semblant grander far,
For thereon lies enchantment. So he thought
Of Bronwen, the white-bosomed, for the sake
Of whose sheer whiteness many a hero spilt
The best blood of his heart, until for woe,
Her own heart brake in twain, and now she
sleeps

Always on Alaw-bank ; of Arianrod,
Don's silver-circled daughter, whose star-throne,
A splendor in the roof of summer nights,
Is but a hint of what her radiance was
When she was mortal ; of the Flower-devised,
That magic lady of the meadow-sweet
And the oak-blossom, fragile as the blooms
Whereof she was enfashioned for a bride ;
And last of all, he lingered at that maid
Of soul serene, Olwen, the pure of heart,
So whitely exquisite, her beauty passed
Into a proverb, that a man would say

In speaking of his love, “ Lo, she is fair,
Graceful as Olwen, at whose every step
Four white trefoils upsprang! ”

But as his thought
Touched lightly on each glowing, golden name
Wherewith the eld is glowing, his heart spake
Ever to him of Enid: “ Fair is she,
Past any maid of magic or romance!
Her soul is clearer than the first hour’s dew,
Her face is as a flower in a waste land! ”
And with a perfect knowledging he knew
He loved her with the strength of his whole
life —

With all his manliness and knighthliness
He loved her, and would love her to the end
And summing of his days, whatever she
Might have for him,— love or indifference
Or worse, if worse might be.

But Lyconal,
Undreaming of the emotion of the prince,
Addressed his daughter gently: “ Child, go
thou
Into the town and quickly bring to us
The best of food and liquor thou canst find,
To make our cheer the greater.” And she rose,
Slender and garbed in white, and when she came
Into the court, a honeysuckle-branch,
Low-swinging, touched her cheek, and feverishly

She pressed the cool leaves to her, in a strange,
And strangely sweet, confusion ; while Geraint,
Within the hall, thought how the shadows closed
Sullenly in, how all the brightness went
With her, the source of brightness. Yet the fire
In the wide-hearthéd chimney roared and flamed,
And streamerwise the ruddy light-flood played
Upon the antique stonework of the walls,
Or gathered in patched pools upon the floor,
Of such apparent density they seemed
Splashings of amber liquid. Of all this
The prince was heedless ; still, in fantasy,
He heard one strain of faery melody,
He saw one image rarely delicate ;
And as sometimes, the burden of a song,
Heard once, in lingering recurrences
Runs through the mind, almost unconsciously
Again repeating those same cadences,
In such refrain his heart's words sang to him —
“ Her face is as a flower in a waste land ! ”

Seeing their guest's abstraction, Lyconal
And his good countess courteously forbare
To question him about his journeying,
But waited silently, until, ere long,
Enid returned, with her a stalwart youth,
Bearing a costrel, filled with bread and meat
And flagoned wine. And the earl bade the
youth

Care for the prince's horse, and went himself
To see all done. And Enid laid the board,
And when all was prepared, they sat them down,
The sweet-faced countess at Geraint's right
hand,

Earl Lyconal, at the left. And Enid stood
And served them with a graceful dignity
That made the task ennobled, and Geraint,
Watching her with a love-illumined gaze,
Knew she was fairer in the ancient vest
Of worn, white satin than ever Beale Isoud —
In whose smile Tristram had his paradise —
Ay, or Queen Guenevere, in richest robes
Of sendals and of samites stitched with jewels.

Then, the meal finished, from the room retired
Mother and daughter, and Sir Lyconal
Refilled the prince's goblet and his own ;
And so they mused a space and sipped the wine
And watched the flickering fire-forms, and
Geraint

Could think of Enid only ; till, by chance,
With start of recollection, and a sense
Of guilt for his forgetfulness, the prince
Remembered him his quest — why he was come,
What labor lay before him — and aroused
Himself from reverie, and said, “ Fair earl,
To whom belongs the fortress, by its towers
Dominating the valley ? ” But the earl

Tarried in answering; over his face
A visible shadow crept, that all the light
And genial warmth of hospitality
Merged in a deep despair, and when he spake,
His words were slow with pain: “To me, of
right,
It does belong; I built it, it was mine,
And all the great, wide earldom.” “Ah, fair
sir,”
Queried Geraint in sorrow, “what befell
To strip thee of such riches?”

“Hearken, then,”
Said Lyconal, “if thou wouldest learn the tale.
I tell it well, seeing that I have told
It over to myself so many times —
How many times! I had a brother once,
Twin-born with me, less brother and more friend,
So one in soul we twain. And in a joust
My brother was sore wounded, that he knew
His death was near; wherefore he sent for me:
‘Brother, I die, yet grieve I not for that.
This is my grief: Eddern, my stripling son,
Soon fatherless as well as motherless —
What will betide him? Therefore, Lyconal,
True brother and true friend, be thou to him
A second father, be his guardian,
Befriend him, counsel him, as thine own son
Have ward of his estate, lest in the swift,

Hot rashness of his youth, he squander all
And beggar him. Brother, to do all this
Pledge me thy word! ' I pledged it, and he died.

" Thus came into my house my brother's son,
Eddern, scarce more than boy, whom well I
loved

Both for his father's sake and for his own.
For he was comely — yea, and even now
Hath certain claim to fairness, though much
marred

By long, most shameless license — and alert,
Quick-witted, active-bodied, swift to learn,
Swifter to put in practice; yet alway
Heady, too proud, reckless of all control,
And sometimes cruel — faults which indulgently
I charged upon his youth, telling myself
Time would mend all. But time did not amend.
For, as the years sped by, his orgule waxed
And ripened into insolence; still more
He set at naught my counsel; nay, far worse,
Allied himself with wild companions,
Plunged in excesses,— he, outstripping all
In profligacy and prodigality,
Free liver and free lover. And when I,
Ruefully watching this my brother's son
Upon our name bring tarnishment, essayed
To check his imminent ruin, loud he spake
Against me, saying, ' Now that I am man,

Give to me mine estate!' Whereat I told
Him all his father said before he died,
Adding, 'Reform thee, nephew, and I will
Render thee every farthing; otherwise,
I can not and be faithful to my trust.'

"Which plunged him into such a furious rage,
He stormed me like a madman, threatening
Revengement dire,— threats, which, alas, too
well

He fulfilled to the utterance. Since for this,
And also that I would not pleasure him
With Enid for his bride (a child in years
She was, not yet fifteen, though had she been
A woman grown, I had not given her
To such a profligate) he raised a band
Of ruffian ne'er-do-wells, whom fast he bound
With promises of pillage and free leave
To stuff their hungry purses with the gold
Of such as, for my sake, might dare oppose
His usurpation; and one moonless night
Four years this next September, with his troop
Attacked me in the fortress thou hast seen,
Wherein I lay unguarded, with few swords
Upon my walls, since, maugre his wild threats,
I had not dreamed of such ingratitude.
So, hardly had I heard his battle-cry,
When my gates inward crashed, and all the
courts

Filled with my nephew's men; my men were slain,
And I was taken prisoner, and my wife
And daughter dragged before me. Then he spake,
The son of Nudd, my brother, ' Hear me, earl:
I grant thee one last opportunity
To avert disgrace — give me the maid I love,
My cousin, Enid.' Ere I could refuse,
My daughter took the answer from my lips,
With straight, white fearlessness, ' Not while I live ! '

' Go, then ! ' he cried; ' In the old, wasted hall,
Built by our forbears in an age long past,
Take up your residence. In poverty
Abide, ye three; for though, for bond of blood,
I will not slay you, nathless, ye shall know
The heaviness of my hand ! And it may be
The slowly-crawling years, lean, hard with want,
And sick with memory of other days,
Will bring me ampler vengeance than your deaths,
With Death's enfranchisement ! Go now !
Away ! '

" And outcast went we through our castle-gates
Into the town. And knots of people stood
Along the way, weeping and sorrowful —
My friends — but impotent, silent from fear,

For Eddern's men were allwhere ; and if once
An arm were raised to help us, swift and sure
The hired sword did its work. So did we come
To this old hall, and here have we abode.
And though, in my first madness, I had thought
To raise the land against him, soon I found
Such hopes were vain, for though they pitied me,
The goodmen, and some loved me, when I spake
Of armed reprise, ever they edged away
With talk of wives and daughters — how they
could

Not jeopardize their safety. Others' wrongs
Are easily forgiven, and the crime
Of one in power men willingly condone.

“ Moreover, with sure craft, my nephew used
Unwonted latitude in all the laws
He made for government, and privileges
Unheard-of, gave the rabble. For this cause,
And also that he is a mighty man
Of war, of reckless valiance, hard of stroke,
With scarce a match in tourney, therefore, they,
The fickle mob, with facile compliance,
Bowed to his will ; ay, more, they gradually grew
To pride them on the prowess of their earl,
For so they came to call him, in despite
Of my still living. Likewise, as he rose
In their regard, I sank, for that is law ;
And so it fortuned, in the very ones

Who owed me most, and loved me best, I
thought,
Little by little I perceived a change,—
Less reverence, more of pity, and from that
To less of pity, and a faint contempt
For wrongs now wearisome — I, come to this,
I, Lyconal, once lord of a broad land!

“ And thus, fair youth, well on to four slow
years

Have halted by ; yet still that shameful night
Burns in my brain. Never shall I forget
That night’s humiliation till I die,—
Who knows, mayhap not then. And when I
think

Upon my wife and daughter, all I have
To love in the wide world — what they have lost
Of comfort and of luxury, and how
They suffer here in poverty, nay, want —
Then am I like to die in my wanhope.
Although it is a truth, that they, on whom
Privation hath borne hardest, in their turn,
With some high fortitude that I have not,
Have borne it best — so uncomplainingly,
So cheerfully, with such firm bravery —
Often I shame me of my violence.

“ Now I am old ; my dear wife, too, is old.
For us there can not be much more of woe,

If woe outlive not life. And in that chance
Would I rejoice, but that I think again
Of my sweet daughter, Enid. I, once gone,
Mine arm, however withered, once removed,
Who then will guard her from the wolfish world?
Who then will cherish her in these dark days
Of lawlessness and many wandering lusts?
Her fineness and her fairness — weak indeed
Must such defenses be. And knowing this,
How often have I wished I had a son
To fight his sister's battles, to protect
And foster her, the flowering of my race!
Nay, nor to stop with that; but with my blood
Singing a song of vengeance in his veins,
To give once more my banner to the wind,
To sound once more my cry before the walls
Of mine own castle, to remaster it,
To slay the traitor in the midst thereof,
To lift again my house to its estate!"

And with the final word, the good earl's voice,
Vibrant with feeling hardly held in check,
Pealed clarionwise, as if himself had been
Attacker and avenger, with the strength
And warriorhood of other days, when oft
He led his men into the thickest press,
A shatterer of the foe! And ere the light
Of visionary triumph could grow dim
Within his eyes, he saw that Prince Geraint

Was watching him intently, with a strange
And concentrated eagerness of gaze.
Earnestly asked the prince: "Then is the man
Who lords it now in yonder fortress-hall —
Yea, even he who but this afternoon,
Bearing a silver griffon on red shield,
While all men hailed him as a conqueror,
Did ride thereto with lady and with dwarf —
Is he, in truth, thy nephew, noble earl?"
"In very truth," said Lyconal, wondering,
"None other, none but Eddern." "God be
thanked!"
Cried then Geraint. "So do thy wrongs and
mine
Cleave to a single man, and with one stroke
Will I avenge us all!" And in the surge
Of his exultancy, he whipped his sword
Out from the figured scabbard, and it seemed
A blade of fire, so fast the streaming light
Poured from its edge. "Look! Look!" he
cried again,
"The sword of thy revenge, Sir Lyconal!"

And then to the bewildered earl he spake
The purpose of his coming, in detail
Told of the outrage done unto the Queen
Through the Queen's damsel, how himself re-
ceived,
From the dwarf's hand, the insult of the blow

Of which upon his neck the stripes were blue,
While Eddern, son of Nudd, permitted all.
“ And since I could not punish him at the time,
These two days have I followed, and I find,
Now, that the man who hath despoiléd thee,
And the uncourteous knave whose arrogance
Dared to indignify even the Queen,
Are one man and the same ; wherefore I say,
When meeting him as Guenevere’s champion,
On thy cause, too, will I encounter him,
And in one battle, with one selfsame sword,
If Fortune speed me, will I vanquish him,
And from him force the reparation due
Unto our sovran Lady and unto thee.
My name I have not told thee, yet it is
Full fitting thou shouldst know ; I am Geraint,
King Erbin’s son of Devon, and a knight
Of Arthur’s court.”

Which hearing, Lyconal,
Seizing the prince’s hand, with hearty joy
Clasped it and said : “ Do I then see Ge-
raint ? —

Geraint of Devon ? Ah, fair youth, I knew
Thou wert of noble parage — manifest
Is that made by thy bearing — yet never
dreamed
That thou shouldst stand so close beside the
throne

As Erbin's son, the cousin of the King.
How often have I heard high things of thee!—
How, foremost ever in the tourney-fray,
No less within the fiercer shock of war,
The golden eagles of my lord Geraint
Wing to the victory! Heard have I, too,
Of thy great gentleness and courtesy,
Which are the crown of knighthood!"

"Nay, fair sir,"

Answered Geraint, "do we not speak of these.
Rather devise how earliest, in just quarrel,
I may engage with Eddern."

Lyconal

Pondered awhile, and at the last he spake
Slowly, as one perplexed: "Thus stands the
case:
My nephew comes from Narberth, whither he
went
A sennight since, for there a prince let cry
A tournament, the circlet-prize whereof
The shout goes Eddern won; he is well-made,
Large-bodied as thou dost know, of tireless
strength,
Valiant to recklessness. Now he is come
Again, no whit too soon, since on the morn,
Even to-morrow morn, himself will hold
A princely tournament, which men have named

The Tourney of the Sparrow-hawk, for there,
Shining across the meadowed tilting-field,
Two forkéd shafts of silver will be set,
On them a silver rod, and thereupon,
A sparrow-hawk of gold, destined to her
Whose beauty by her champion's chivalry
Shall be proved paramount. And all the
knights

That thou hast seen — it is this cause which
fills

My town with folk, making the streets to sound
With clang of arms — well-harnessed and well-
horsed,

Will ride into the meadow, and with each
The lady whom best he loves. There will they
hold

Contention for the golden sparrow-hawk,
On one part, Eddern and his vassal-knights,
And on the other, all who from afar
Have journeyed to strive against them. Unto
all

Applies one ruling: no knight may contend
Saving his love come with him.

“ These two years
The tourney hath been held, hath Eddern gained
The golden gree, for few enough there are
Who can endure his stroke. And if this year
He gain it once again, then will no more

Be held the tournament, and he will be
Knight of the Sparrow-hawk from that time
forth

Entitled, though already some do call
Him so in compliment. He will desire
His lady to take the hawk, saying to her:
‘Fairest of women art thou; wherefore, this
year

The prize should long to thee, as it hath longed
These two years previous. If any will

Deny thee, let him keep him well from me! ’ ”

“ Then will *I* make denial! ” said Geraint,
“ So must he battle with me! Blade to blade,
Shield against shield — I ask no more than this!

I have my horse, and if I may have arms
As loan from thee, I will defy him straight,
And strength to strength, undo him if I may! ”

“ Nay,” answered Lyconal, “ thou dost forget
The rule of which I spake. Arms shalt thou
have;

Nathless, thou mayest not joust; nor dame nor
maid

Is in thy company. No knight may joust,
But if the one whom best in the wide world
He loves, be at the field.”

Whereat there fell
A pause that grew in silence, and Geraint
Thought of the maiden Enid, whom he loved,

Only, in all the world ; and swiftly clear,
A great delight raced through him — dared he
 hope
That *she* would go with him ? And yet to ask
For her thus hastily, without one word,
Even, of wooing — surely that were wrong,
Worse than discourteous ; and yet again,
The tourney-law must needfully be observed,
If he would meet her foe. So Prince Geraint
Debated with himself, but rose at last,
And leaned across the table to the earl,
And spake with quiet manfulness : “ My lord,
The lady whom alone in all the world
I love, is here, within these towers of thine,—
Thy daughter, Enid. Sooth, I never saw
Her brightness till this day ; but this I know,
That truly never hath man loved a maid
As I love her ; her gentleness, her grace,
Passing all others’— as a miracle
They seem to me, for earthly maid too fair.
Thou knowest me, who I am. Wherefore if
 thou
Couldst give me Enid to wife (though I must
 seem
In very truth presumptuous, that I ask
Thy one great treasure), fortuned it I lose
To-morrow battle and life, still would she be
Unsullied as before ; and should I win,
Then would I take her unto Arthur’s hall,

Make her my bride, and set mine every thought
To increase her worship and her happiness.
And I would love her to my length of days,
And care for her as no man else could care,
However worthier. I would excel
All men in my great love's true tenderness.
That may I promise thee. Yea, should I fail
Therein but once, then might high God requite
Me with deserved punishment,— a shame
To knighthood and to manhood!"

"Be it so!"

Answered Earl Lyconal, "I could not find
A better husband for her — nay, nor ask
A better — than Erbin's son. So do I troth
To thee my daughter, Enid. I would say
Honour her with the honour that is due
Such excellence as hers, but knowing thee,
I am content. And now, my lord Geraint,
We must take counsel how we can restore
Mine ancient armour, weakened with disuse,
Broken, I fear. No time have we to lose;
For the night latens fast, and by the prime
Thou must be entered in the tilting-field."

III

WHILE yet the eastern hills were pale with dawn,
High in the breeze-swept turret where he lay,
Geraint arose, and armed him for the fight
In Lyconal's armour, and with steps that clanged
Upon the stone-hewed stair, betook himself
To the small courtyard to make ready his horse,
Stoutly, against the combat.

And it chanced
That Enid, passing through the darksome hall,
Came to the court's low portal, where she saw
The young knight all in armour, saw his steed
Harnessed for war and ready to depart.
And Enid thought, "Is he so fain to fare?"
And thought again, "Why must he fare so soon?"
Thrilled with a shy, vague sorrow, though she knew
Not yet her love for him. And hesitant
She stood a space; then lightly stepped outside
Upon the old grey porch, and slowly said,
With wistfulness unpurposed in her tone,
"So soon to go, fair lord?"

Whereat Geraint,
Uplooking, saw her there, and his young love
Leaped in his eyes at the sweet sight of her!
For framed she was in somber ivy-sprays,
And crowned with closed, white honeysuckle-
blooms!

And all the dawn seemed shining on her brow,
And all the court seemed brimming with a light
That had not been before! "Not to go far,
Sweet maid," replied the prince, and at her
words

With joyance did his heart grow clamorous,
"But to the tilting-field."

But Enid knew
Not what the speech betokened, and she felt
A wonderment exceeding, and she said,
"And wilt thou, O my lord, enter the fray?"
Then Geraint knew that she had not been told,
And he stood mute and saddened, and in shame
Of that which he intended.

But behold,
Into the courtyard came Sir Lyconal
And saw the twain. Straightway he went to
them,
And placed in Prince Geraint's his daughter's
hand;
And while she blushed uncomprehendingly,

Startled, wide-eyed, her father said: "My child,
I have not yet informed thee that last night
I did betroth thee to this youth, who now
This morn, will fight with Eddern, our common
foe.

Within the hour do we accompany him
Down to the meadow, where thyself shall be
In all men's sight the one whom best he loves.
And if he win the battle, Enid mine,
Then will he take thee unto Arthur's court
And wed thee with all honour. Cause indeed
Is there for naught save pride in this alliance,
For he is son of Erbin, Devon's king,
Geraint, cousin to Arthur. Thou hast heard
Me speak full often of him in high praise."

Which saying, Lyconal passed within the hall.
Again they were alone. And Enid said
Never a word and drew her hand away.
Her face held a white wonder, and her eyes
Had depths no man might fathom. Straight
and still,
Scarce seeming mortal, in the awakening hush
Of the new day she stood, the first long ray
Of the sun, bright on her temples. And Ge-
raint,
Waiting in vain for but one word, one glance,
Looked forward to the emptiness of life

Which must, without her, be forever his ;
And in the shadow of those sunless years,
Drearly put the hoping from his heart,
And curbed his longing, and very gently said :

“ I see it is displeasing unto thee.
Forgive me that I thought — ay, truly
thought —

Thou knewest all, perchance not disinclined.
Well am I ware (and was ware at the time !)
That I had in my mind a shameful thing
(Which still I would have done !) — to make
thee mine,

Unwooed, unwon, to serve mine own delight
By taking thee, all loveless, as a bride,
Thy will not free, constrainéd. No excuse
Have I to offer but my love for thee ;
Howbeit, Love himself can not excuse
The bound of my presumption. O my dear,
Now dearest when I shut me from thy smile,
Forgive me if thou canst ! Yet must I crave
One little boon. Thou knowest the tourney-law,
And how, if I will battle with the man
Who hath so injured thee, I must comply
With that same law. Wherefore I ask thee, be
My lady for this day, and if I win —
And win I will or die — that very hour,
Out from the tilt-yard will I ride away,
Giving thee freedom to bestow thy heart

Upon some happier man of thine own choice,—
Unbidden, uncomelled. And afterwards
I shall not come again — I shall not see
Thee ever any more — not any more
Trouble thee with my presence, though alway
Mine eyes see nothing but thy golden hair,
Mine ears hear nothing but thy magic voice
Singing of Faerie. Only this I claim
Ever as mine — my memory of thee ;
Thou wilt not bid me to put that away
And make me, to the utterance, desolate ! ”

And having said, he thought if he might once
Kiss just her finger-tips, he would not ask
More than that little heaven ! But unto him
Amazed, not daring to believe what wrought
The strange, new, subtle marvel in her smile,
Enid turned slowly, and these words she spake :
“ My love, my knight, true lover and true
knight,
I love thee well,” and kissed him on the lips !

And not within the soul of Prince Geraint
Had burned a stronger self-transforming flame,
Springing toward all high things, when in the
blaze
Of altar-tapers, through the silent hours —
Silent, but were they stirred with presences ? —
A candidate for knighthood, he had kept

The mystic vigil which should purify
And cleanse him to a fittingness to take
The strait, stern vows of Arthur's chivalry,
Than now this morn within his soul there burned,
When kneeling in a shrine not served of hands,
When kneeling in the priestless fane of Love,
Whose altar is the holiest in the world;
When from himself he was so lifted up
That all his homage towered to one fair height
And all intention streamed to one resolve —
By conduct ever nobler, knightlier,
To prove Love's grace was not too ill bestowed,
To prove, so far as any might deserve
Such grace, he would deserve it, by his life.

So they went forward to the tilting-field,
Lyconal and his countess, following them,
Geraint and Enid. And the ways were dense
With motley press of people — men-at-arms
And craftsmen of the guilds and serving-folk,
Granted a holiday; and burgesses,
Prosperous merchants clad in costly silks,
With their stout, comely wives and cherry-
cheeked,
Beribboned daughters; and as white of throat
And slim of waist as maidens, their long hair
Perfumed and curled, young pages to the great,
Bright in their broiderries and golden chains,
Vivid in purple stuffs and damassins.

Like to the sea, the ever-eddying throngs
Billowed and surged ; and even as the sea
Is cleft by the sharp, spume-upcasting prow,
Cleft were the crowds, when haughtily and slow,
His squire behind him bearing lance and shield,
His lady on her palfrey at his side,
Upon a great destrier, caparisoned
In colour-flaunting silk, himself in mail
And pluméd helm, a knight adventurous
Passed to the tournament.

And so, at length,

They saw a meadow jewelléd with the dew,
Besprent with tiny blooms of gold and white.
And there the lists were set, the barriers
Defined, and dazzling, at one end thereof,
Upon a silver rod, the sparrow-hawk
In its small, golden body caught the gold
Of the new sun, and like a tiny sun
Flamed with a golden glory athwart the field.
And round the meadow were pavilions gay
Of silks of various colours ; and of these,
The midmost and the largest was of blue,
The brightest azure, and a banner streamed
Therefrom, wrought with a sparrow-hawk of
gold.
And Lyconal said, “ There does my nephew
bide.”

And who could tell the splendor of the knights,
In gorgeous pageantry around the lists
Riding with curvet, bound, and caracole? —
The paintures and the blazonings of their
shields,
The colours of their surcoats, of their arms,
The tinctures of their favours, veils and sleeves,
The trappours of their steeds? There were em-
ployed
All marvelous hues and fair — scarlet and
green,
Flame-coloured, indigo, and party-tints,
Deep-hearted crimson and clear azure-blue,
And much of silver, and even more of gold.
And how to tell the glitter and the show,
The flash of jewels, the glance of purple silks,
Whiteness of ermine, fulgor of cisclaton,
Shimmer of samite, sheen of woven gold,
And, fairer far, the sheen of golden hair,
Vermeil of lips, azure of laughing eyes,
Whiteness of throat, of bosom, and of brow —
The fairness of fair ladies, damsel, dame,
Matron and supple maid, where, from the tiers
Of silk-spread, cushioned seats, they viewed the
field?
All was such colour, brilliance and estate,
All was such joyance and great merriment,
That Prince Geraint, beholding this array,
.Thought he had seen no goodlier ordinance

At Castle Lonazep, nor at Surluse
When Galahalt of the High Heart let cry
The seven-days tournament, whose rumor drew
Kings from afar and princes from out-isles.

But even while his admiration paid
To each detail the praise well-merited,
Still he remembered how this lavishness,
This pomp, this many-hued magnificence,
Was of an ingrate's giving, and he turned
And spake to Lyconal: "Most noble earl,
All this which in itself is admirable,
But which the treason of the usurper stains,
Is thine of right, and shall be thine again,
Saving I die."

Then to the barriers
Came pursuivants, and shrilly blew to field.
Forthright, by opposite ways, into the lists
Two squadrons rode, whereof in one were ranged
All errant knights, who, journeying from afar,
Sought to increase their worship and renown;
While from the other, marshalled in serried
ranks,
The vassal-knights of Eddern fronted them,
Though he himself came not. Which noticing,
Lyconal said, "Prince, take no part in this;
Await my nephew's entrance." As he spake,
With mighty shock of battle the lines met

In middes of the field. There many a spear
To-shivered, many a horse plunged riderless,
And headlong many a knight was hurled to
earth,

Among the broken flowers and sodden grass,
Beneath the trampling hoofs of wounded steeds.
Hither and thither flowed the battle-tide,
One party now ascendant, and again,
The other ; so, with victory pendulous,
They fought unceasingly two hours and more,
Until at last, disparply, overborne,
The errant knights were driven from the field,
And Eddern's men had triumphed.

And once more,

After the exultation died away,
The heralds blew to field, and instantly
Fell an expectant hush. And Prince Geraint
Leaped lightly to the saddle, and his lance
Placed in the rest. Then Enid came and stood
Beside him, and unbound the folded width
Of silk which was her wimple, and with hands
That trembled, gave it him, speaking so low
Her words he just could hear, “ O knight of
mine,

I have naught else to give thee ; wilt thou wear
This as my favour ? ” Joyously the prince,
Binding about his arm the glistening silk,
Answered, and gently : “ See ! I wear it here

Upon my sword-arm. It will render me
Invincible, for Love empowers it;
Though my foe have the strength of twenty
men,
He hath not strength to overcome me now!"

Straightway behold, forth from the azure tent
Rode Eddern, son of Nudd. Azure and gold
Were his accoutrements, his shield's device,
A golden sparrow-hawk. His greaves were
light

Yet strong, and highly polished; triple steel
Was woven in the mail which covered him;
And from his burnished helm uprose a crest
Of three bright-yellow plumes.

With arching neck
And all of stately slowness, his destrier,
In yellow sendal housed, bordured with blue,
Stepped through the lists, and great was the
acclaim

Attending the knight's progress. Lance in rest,
He rode the meadow's length and drew in rein
Beside the shafts of silver. Then to him,
Upon her fair, white palfrey, with the dwarf
Walking close to her stirrup, came the one
Whom best he loved, and Eddern took her hand
And spake that all might hear: "The loveliest

Of women art thou; wherefore, take down the
prize,
This sparrow-hawk of gold. It is the meed
Of thy surpassing beauty. If any will
Forfend thee, he must answer with his life!"

But Geraint interposed: "Not unto thee,
Lady, belongs the prize, for if it be
The meed of beauty, then must it belong
Unto this maiden fairer far than thou —
Fairer, more courteous, and lovelier! —
And that will I maintain with my heart's
blood!"

And Eddern looked upon him in amaze.
He did not recognize him; for who would
Have recognized the youth of yesterday,
Clad then with satin and with purple silk,
In this tall knight in ancient, battered arms?
And in that first glance seeing but the arms —
The uncouth helm, the ventail worn and old,
The rusted hauberk with its broken rings,
The cumbrous greaves, the antique, dinted shield
Wherfrom long since the painture had been
rased,
Swiftly his wonderment passed into scorn
And scornfully a sneer formed on his lips.
But, on an afterthought, looking beyond
To see what lady this too reckless youth

Had vaunted fairer, met his cousin's eyes —
His cousin Enid's! — met Sir Lyconal's
Bitter, accusing gaze, saw Lyconal's wife,
And understood it was their champion
Who challenged him! And with a violent wave
Of anger crimsoning his face, he cried,
“ Then guard thee from thy death! ”

Whereat they drew
Apart an acre's space, feutred their spears,
Clapped spurs unto their steeds, and with the
sound
Of thunder melled together, that the lance
In each man's hand brake even to the haft.
Then Lyconal served Geraint a second spear,
And so the dwarf served Eddern, and again
In onslaught furious, with the fearful shock
Of warring winds, they met, and yet again,
Three sets of lances shivering to bits.
But for the fourth encounter, the good earl
Bare to Geraint a spear of wondrous strength,
With a great, flawless shaft and a strong point,
Well-tempered and well-sharpened: “ Prince,
behold
The lance I held what day I was made knight,
Many long years ago. It may endure
Where others fail; take it and strike him
down! ”

Aiming at Eddern's shield, Geraint spurred
hard,
And countering, again his foeman's spear
To splinters flew, but Lyconal's lance held fast,
And cleft the shield in twain and brake the mail
And burst the girths, that down from his
destrier,
Saddle and all, Eddern was dashed to earth.

But he rose, raging. Unto him Geraint,
Quickly dismounting, casting shield away
That he might have no vantage in the fight,
Rushed, and each drew his sword, and fiercely
smote
Upon the other's helm, that sparks of fire
Sprang from the clashing of the steel on steel
In the grim rain of blows. With stroke and
foyne,
Tracing, traversing, now on the right hand,
Now on the left, they fought like more than men,
And neither could prevail, so equally
Were they twain matched. Their helms were
split and crushed,
Their ventails rent; their hauberks, all to-
hacked,
Hung on them in long shreds; their arms grew
faint
With their unceasing travail, and their sight
Dim, through a mist of blood. Then suddenly

Eddern lunged mightily, and smote Geraint
So hard upon the temple that the steel
Of his helm, sundering, a flake of steel
Was riven away, and only the thin coiffe
Protected the brain, and the descending sword
Cleft wide the mail upon the prince's side
More than a hand's breadth. Giddily then
 Geraint

Reeled from the blow, and Enid tried to speak
But could not for the horror, and of the shout
Of Lyconal, "O vengeance for the Queen!"
Geraint heard not a word. But while his ears
Were filled with roarings, and above his eyes
A darkness writhed, and all of life and love
Seemed slipping, slipping from him, in one
glimpse

Narrowed by closing lids, upon his arm
He saw the silken favour given of love,
And all it meant to him flashed through his
mind;
And for one final effort he called to him
The fullness of his strength, and raised his
sword

High, high above his head and with such force
Smote on the other's helm that the sword
crashed

Through helm and coiffe of steel, through skin
and flesh,

And stayed not till it wounded even the bone —

And as a dead man falls, fell Eddern to earth.

Then while the knights and ladies gathered round

With sighs and exclamations, Prince Geraint
Unlaced his foeman's ventail, and the air
Drew Eddern from his swooning. And the
prince

Spake to Sir Lyconal, " My lord, behold
Thy strong oppressor. Shall he live or die?
Unto thy will I give him." And the earl,
Long-looking on his brother's only son,
Made answer: " I have thought if ever came
The means to slay him, with rejoicing should
I send him down to death. Now it *is* come,
And lo, I can not. For a ghost is here
'Twixt me and my revengement. Seeing him,
Why must I see my brother? Let him live,
So he make reparation!"

" Son of Nudd,
Eddern," said Prince Geraint, " thy life is
spared

Upon thy promise to perform two things;
Refuse, thou diest." But the fallen man
moaned,

" Die? Live or die? What matter? — I am
shamed!"

" First, thou shalt render to Sir Lyconal,

Thine uncle, what is his — all goods and gold,
Lands and retainers. On this very field
Shalt thou thus reinstate him. Then straight-
way,

With lady and with dwarf thou shalt ride forth
To Arthur's hall, before Queen Guenevere
To cast thyself, such full amends to make
As she may adjudge fitting. Marvel not!
Dost thou forget how but two days agone,
Beside the Wood of Dean, thou didst allow
Thy dwarf to strike the damsel of the Queen,
And through her, to insult the Queen herself?
Dost thou forget the knight who also had
A blow from thy slave's hand? I am that
knight,

But with mine own revenge am I content.
For that outrage thou goest to Guenevere,
Saying Geraint hath sent thee. Yea or nay?"
And Eddern, son of Nudd, in halting speech
Replied, " So be it! These will I perform;
Though why I hardly know, saving it be,
To make my shame the greater, even while
shamed,
Life waxes sweet!"

And tottering he rose,
The red mire clinging to his golden plumes,
And swaying with the weakness of his hurt,

Made proclamation that unto the earl,
His uncle, he did render lands and goods —
All whereof he had reaved him — and ordained
That all his knights do homage to the earl
And be his vassals true ; and kneeling low,
Within Sir Lyconal's hands he placed his own
Limp, bloodless hands, and sware him fealty.
Then called he for his horse and rode away,
His dwarf in sullen silence at his side,
His lady, much lamenting. And he fared
Unto Caerleon, and the Queen was kind
And pardoned him and healed him,— ay, did
more ;
For seeing well that in him was a force
Of manhood truly great, though evil life
Had warped it to misusage, Guenevere,
By ever-gentle tact and courtesy,
And high ensample of fair chivalry,
Won Eddern to a hatred of the old,
Fierce lawlessness he once had revelled in ;
And though the task was difficult, and the way
Fraught with discouragements, he grew at last
Into a greater Eddern, no less brave
And resolute than before, but loving truth
And right and gentleness,— a man esteemed
Both by his fellows of the Table Round,
And by the King. And Arthur stablished him
As governor in the wild, northern land —
A post full honourable and perilous —

To guard those distant marches from the swarms
Of pagans who looked longing from the wave.
And what time in an after year the King
Sailed over sea against the lord of Rome,
Lucius the Evil, in that mighty host
Went Eddern, none more trusted of his Prince;
And there, upon Cotentin's bloody field
He fought, and fighting fell, and was no more.

But for that night Sir Lyconal proclaimed
Within his fortress a fair festival,
The lordliest the land had ever seen.
To this were all folk welcome, were they born
In high or low estate — in gentle's hall
Or peasant's cottage — all alike should share
In one great merry-making which the earl
Would hold to honour that young knight from
whom
He had his reinstatement.

And it chanced
In the slant sunshine of late afternoon,
That Prince Geraint, to whose wounds had been
laid
Soft salves and healing ointments, stood within
The shadow of the battlements and watched
The throngs of townsmen in the streets below

At every corner gathered, and well guessed
Their eager talk of what that day had seen.

Thither to him came noble Lyconal,
Attired in crimson, overwrought with gold.
Bright was his face with happiness, and it
 seemed
Full twenty years had from his shoulders
 slipped,
So blithely straight, his carriage. "My lord
earl,"
Said Prince Geraint, "it does content me well
To see thee in thy properness of state.
And Enid — where is she?" Ere answering,
Lyconal smiled, "She will array herself
To do thee honour, prince." Whereat Geraint
Smiled also but said earnestly, "My lord,
I pray thee ask will she first speak with me."
Lyconal went with that request, and soon
Came Enid, and upon her arm she bare
The robe she wished to don,— a wondrous silk
Of shaded blue, with such dense broidery
Of tiny silver flowers it had the sheen
Of moonlight on deep waters; and she showed
The wonders of the dress, dwelling thereon
With a shy pride and gladness. But Geraint,
With eyes for her face only, where the play
Of rose upon the white and white on rose
Wrought beauty ever new and marvelous,

Took both her hands in his and spake to her:

“ Belovéd, wouldst thou think me rude, unkind,
If I should say, ‘ Wear not this glittering
gown,—

Not to the feast thy father holds this eve,
Neither to-morrow, going to Arthur’s hall.
Wear rather this, thy satiny robe of white,
Though old it be, and worn? ’ Nay, do not
look

So grieved, so woebegone. Though I must seem
Capricious, strangely-humoured, pleasure me,
My Enid, in this matter. I would have
The Queen, and the Queen only, of her grace
To clothe thee in arrayment sumptuous
First on that day when I may call thee bride.
Thou art my love, the Queen, a most true friend,
As she will be thy friend on knowing thee;
I trust ye twain will love each other well.
To her hands would I take thee, by her hands
To be attired full fairly. And again,
I love thee in this garb; more fair art thou
To me in this white vest than didst thou wear
A gown of woven gold. In this I saw
Thee first and knew I loved thee, and in this,
Truly it seems to me thou hast a charm—
Though what it is I find no words to tell—
Thou couldst not have in a more stately robe.
At court much must be different; but here,

Seeing thee thus, all white and rose and gold,
And thinking how I found thee, how I heard
Thee singing in the sunset's witchery,
I sometimes think I have won not a maid
Of mortal fairness and of mortal love,
But a white fay from Faerie; for the fays,
Like thee, have hair of gold, colour as bright
And clearly delicate, lips red like thine,
Voice of the same sweet music, and they wear
White always, like to this. My wish it is
To keep thy faery whiteness while I may;
Belovéd, wilt thou pleasure me in this?"

And willingly she put the gown away.
And by the prince's side, at that great feast
Sat, robed in ancient white, the hawk of gold
Before her, and a light within her eyes;
And all men said she was the fairest there.

IV

WHEN the next day lay bright upon the land,
Toward undorne waxing, the farewells were
said —

Farewells, with smiles and tears. And then Ge-
raint

Placed Enid on her palfrey white as milk,
Her father's parting gift; and so, while high
Upon the parapets to watch them go
Stood Lyconal and his wife, below them grouped
The lords and ladies of the earl's household,
Waving gay scarves in lingering farewell,
They twain did ride away, and it was June,
And all the world was bathed in molten gold
Of June's young sunshine. And with golden
hair

Netting the sunlight, with eyes luminous
By reason of the brightness in her soul,
In vest of white upon her milk-white steed,
Unto her lover Enid was as one
But lately come from Faerie,— far too fair
For this old world. And ever must he think
In a sheer, humble wonder, “ Lo, her eyes!
Her smile, her smile! These are the totaling
Of all my life! That these should be for me!”

They went another way than that o'er which
Geraint had followed Eddern when he came.
Dividing the deep verdance of the hills,
The road ran on, so hedged with the gay
broom's

Bright-blossoming gold, it might have been the
path

To some land of enchantment,— even that
Which old romances say forever leads
To the far Plain of Pleasure. Larkspurs
reared

Their columned purple, wilding roses trailed
Their pink blooms by the way. Never the sky
Had been of hue more wonderful — a dome
Of pale, translucent sapphire, in whose vault
Glittered those ice-white mansions which the
clouds

Do build for Summer's dwelling, many-towered
And hundred-turreted, with argent, halled,
With the sun's gold, emportaled. And Geraint
Remembered him of Launfal, and the fay,
And how they rode to Faerie ; and he said,
“ Like Launfal and his love in olden time,
My Enid, do we ride to that far land
Of every rainbow's ending? ” But her eyes
Were grave, her smile half-wistful, and she said,
“ Triamour am I not, mine own Geraint.”

And they came to a meadow, where a stream —

A rivulet a boy could step across —
Glinted in fluent sunfire between banks
Now darksome under drooping willow-boughs,
Now with white daisies bordured, and the frail,
Tremulous blue of harebells, swinging light
Upon thread-slender stems. The meadow-
grass,
Lush, feathery, sweet-scented, bowed beneath
The pressure of the wind's invisible
But audible wings — motion so rhythmical
That all before the riders was a sea
Of undulating green, save when, at times,
Ghost-grey upon the greenness, glidingly
Floated the shadows of the summer clouds.
And so, through multiple play of light and
shade
Fared Enid and Geraint, and as they passed
Across the meadow, somewhere in the blue
Above, or in the emerald at their feet,
A lark sang joyously.

And when the sun
Burned in the zenith, and the slumberous noon
Weighted the world, and a fine, aureate mist
Of straightly-falling radiance, curtain-wise
Hung between earth and sky, in its deep glow
So veiled the land that all things were trans-
formed
To a strange, bright illusion, beautiful

As that bright Isle of Summer which is seen
Sometimes on phantom wave-line, rested they
Beneath a mighty ash-tree, at the edge
Of a great forest. And of white and gold
Was woven the flower-carpet of the wood,
And white and gold was Enid; and Geraint,
Watching the sifted sunlight in her hair,
Dreamed of the Courts of Faerie, and he said,
“O Princess of the Vale of Avalon,
What splendor is upon thee?” But her smile
Was grave, and her eyes wistful, and she said,
“Splendor of Avalon would it were, my lord!”

And they rode forward through the forest-land.
Often by stately avenues they passed
To noble parks and spacious pleasaunces;
And otherwhile, by paths of bending fern,
Entered close, humid coverts, alder-screened
To a perpetual twilight, where they saw
Tall, white and graceful lilies, like young saints
Sheltered in shadowed cloisters. Thus they
fared

Until in lengthening shades the undertide
Journeyed to even, and the west grew flame
With the sun’s setting, when, in a fair glade,
The lovers checked their steeds, and with one
thought,
Wordless before the beauty, watched the sky
Fade from its gorgeous purple and its rose,

Through pinks and amethysts, with paling
gleams
Of opal lights, through pearls and lavenders,
Into dove-grey and dully-brooding blue;
While to the south, above dim barbacans
Of vapors violet, one great star shone,
A glimmer of red gold.

So with the awe
Of that wide loveliness possessing them,
While all around the blossom-redolent dusk
Spread its enchantments, and a throstle's song
Was poured upon the evening in a flood
Of music almost palpable, they came
Unto a forest hermitage — a pile
Of low, grey walls, laved by a mountain rill,
And topped by ancient trees wherethrough the
wind
Breathed with insistent harmonies. Therein
They parted for the night, and in her heart
Enid knew well, as knew Geraint in his,
That never would a day of such delight
Be theirs again,— never, for all their love —
That never such a day could be again.

When the next afternoon was but half-spent,
Below them to the south, they saw the line
Of vaporous blue which marked the Severn Sea;
And nearer, in the green vale of the Usk's

Broad, sinuous flood, white-shining in the sun,
Beheld Caerleon's heaven-yearning towers.

Then they went forward gladly, and in haste,
And heard a sound of harping. In the wood
Walked Alarin the harper, and a knight
Was with him of the name of Honolan,
Famed for his fine, fair hair; and by a strain
Of blood, much thinned and weakened though it
was,

This Honolan was kinsman to Geraint.
Yet closest kinsmanship had never served
To make him love Geraint; for envious
He was of heart, and that King Arthur held
The prince high in his favour, honouring him
In measure to the knightliness he showed,
Was ample reason for Sir Honolan
To hate Geraint in secret, and to hope,
Above all other hopes, to work him woe.
And yet, until a time should come, he kept
His malice so concealed, he was so smooth,
So silken-soft of manner, free with smiles,
And traitorly fine-spoken, that no one,
Geraint the least of all, could dream him false.

As these two loitered down the forest-path,
Around a sudden turn, where the thick sward
Muffled their coming, Enid and the prince
Rode through a patch of sunlight. And as one

Bewitched, at the white beauty of the maid
Alarin stared, and all thought of his song
Fled from him, and unknowing what he did,
He struck so roughly the taut music-strings
That whirring shrill one snapped beneath his
hand.

Which, Honolan perceiving, smiled, and bowed
To cover that too evil smile, and spake
With all of joy and fervor to Geraint:
“ Welcome, my lord! Thy coming gladdens me
Past my poor powers of speech. We have all
heard

The story of thy prowess, from the lips
Of one who now is yolden, and retired,
At the Queen’s command, into a holy house
Until his wounds be healed. Hearing the tale,
Who did rejoice as I, who am thy kin?
But one desire had I, this hour fulfilled —
To see thee in thy triumph, and to say
Thy pride therein is not so great as mine.
And that, when seeing thee, he sees also
The fairest lady eyes have ever seen,
Doubles the joy of thy friend, Honolan.”

To whom made answer gaily Prince Geraint:
“ Fair-spoken ever! Knew I not thy heart,
Good kinsman, I might think thy words too
fair;
But in my knowledging they ring with truth,

Thy joy is timely, cousin. I am blest
Beyond all dream of blessing! I am loved
By Enid, daughter of Earl Lyconal.”
And while bowed Honolan, Geraint spake on
To Alarin, who silent stood apart,
“ And thou, Sir Stitcher of the Threads of
Song,
Make me a song of bridals, for this night
I wed the one rare maiden of the world!”
Whereto with slow speech Alarin replied,
“ To sing at others’ bridals, fair, my lord,
I think will ever be my lot in life.
Yet doubt not! Thou shalt have a goodly
song.”

Then they went onward to Caerleon’s gate,
The four in company; and when the watch,
Stationed upon the ramparts of the King,
Beheld their near approach, the news was sent
To Guenevere that Prince Geraint did come,
And with him was a lady passing fair.
And with a noble following, the Queen
Went forth to meet and greet them, and with
words
Of gentleness and courtesy she gave
To Enid welcome as a friend to be.

And that day, for the wedding, Guenevere
Clothed Enid in the garments of a bride,

With gold and jewels upon her, and in her hair
 Jewels and gold. Yet now though like the sun
 For beauty and for brightness, Enid prayed
 That her old, satin vest be not destroyed;
 For thinking how Geraint had held it dear,
 She would preserve it always. And the Queen
 Smiled understandingly and had the gown
 Laid in a chest of cedar.

And that night
 Before Saint Aaron's altar they were wed.
 And afterwards, in the great banquet-hall,
 At the gay bridal-feasting, Alarin,
 True to his promise, sang a goodly song,
 Which song he called Love's House, and it was
 this:

“ Lo, Love hath builded him a stately hall,
 Whereof the ceiling's arch he fashioneth
 Of imagery so delicate a breath
 Might blur it all to discord; on the wall
 The ancient arras, pictured folds a-fall,
 With voice of myriad lovers murmureth,
 Whose sighs and smiles are warp and woof withal.

“ And to irradiate that noble room,
 The lamp of Purity, with steadfast fire,
 Forever shadowlessly burneth higher,
 Fed by sweet oil of Fair Thought, whose perfume
 Balmier is than orient amber-hume,

More subtle than what fragrances suspire
From moon-white flowers of Faerie full in bloom.

“ Lo, Love hath made for him an hallowed place,
Whereof the portal is of beauty rare;
The door-trees are of Constancy, more fair,
Finer than finest porphyry; a grace,
Passing all earthly fulgence, from the face
Of Truth is shed, from that high lintel, where
He standeth, kingly crowned, with crystal mace.

“ And at the threshold, which is Sympathy,
Two staves of odorous sandal, opposite
Each unto other, without light belit,
Do bear two banners of bright blazonry,
Vermeil and green, and in charactery
Of gold, the vermeil hath upon it writ
Time, but the green one hath Eternity.

“ Such is Love’s temple. Whoso would intrude
With forceful foot and portment orgulous,
And speech imperative and clamorous,
Love doth outcast, for never manner rude
He suffereth. But unto him imbued
With all humility, he sayeth thus:
‘ Enter, O Heart, into beatitude! ’ ”



THE TRIAL OF ENID



I

THREE years had sped, three years of cloudless
joy;

And still Geraint and Enid at the court
Of Arthur lingered, happy in their love
Which had known never failing, but become
More wonderful with every piling day,
And in the fair renown that each had gained.

For as the bud is to the perfect bloom,
So was the Enid of that earlier charm
Of Faerie, and the new grace of a maid,
Unto the Enid of this latelier time,
Blossomed to more, not less, of loveliness ;
Enid, by years ennobled, on whom was set
The light of a great beauty, and the crown
Of gracious, ever-stainless womanhood,
Of whom all men said honour as a wife
And praise as a fair woman, and whom the
Queen

Held as the first and closest of her friends,
Loving her even as Geraint had wished.

And Arthur loved Geraint, who in these years,
Frequenting knightly jousts and tournaments,
And all encounters of the lance and shield
And singing sword, ever from all forthbare
The golden eagles on the field of green

Victorious, until a name was his
Upon men's tongues, of the Unvanquished
Knight,
The Prince of Many Battles, and his deeds
The length and breadth of Britain were retold,
And swelling like a wave, his fame was flung
Against the outermost marches of the land.

Then in the fourth year, at the Whitsuntide
Again at old Caerleon-upon-Usk,
King Arthur held his court, and there to him,
Upon a day, rode two men full of years,
Entered the audience-hall, and bowed and said :
“ Hail to thee, Lord of Britain ! We are come
From thy true vassal, Erbin, King of Devon ;
He greets thee as his nephew and his lord,
And asks thy hearkening to his word of need
Which we declare. The feebleness of age
Is on the king, and knowing this, the chiefs
Whose lands do neighbor his are insolent
And covetous grown, and with impunity
Harass his borders, and lay waste his towns,
And ever set their boundaries farther forth.
Erbin is old, and who hath dread of him ?
But Prince Geraint, his son, is strong with
youth,
A mighty warrior whose wide fame is flown
Over the face of the kingdom. Wherefore,
Sire,

Permit the son of Erbin to return
Into his father's realm, that so may be
Back-driven the fierce aggressor, the desire
Of the covetous, plucked from him, and restored
The boundaries of the kingdom. This, the
prayer
Which Erbin sends thee in his hour of need."

To which said Arthur: "And the prayer is
just.

And though, for mine own sake, I would have
wished

The word to come for some less glorious knight
Than Prince Geraint, whose valiance hath no
peer,

The justice of the plea none can deny.

Go ye, take food and wine, refresh yourselves
Of your fatigues, and this same day return,
And Prince Geraint shall follow you to-morn."

Joyfully the ambassadors retired.

Then summoning the prince, King Arthur told
The message sent from Devon; and Geraint,
Although regretful that he must forgo
The noble fellowship of that fair court,
And, before all, the daily intimacy
And close communion with the King he loved,
Looked to his duty and his father's wrongs,
And cheerfully made provision to depart.

And the next morning at the hour of prime,
While the court cried farewells, and Guenevere
Made sorrow for the going of the friend
Whom best she loved, forth from Caerleon's
gates

Rode Prince Geraint and Enid, and with them,
A gallant retinue of five score knights ;
Among them such as Sir Bedvere the Brave,
Who, in an after year, beyond the sea
Fighting for Arthur through the lines of Rome,
At Bayonne found a tomb ; and Peredur,
The seventh son of Evrawc of the North, .
A breaker of enchantments ; bold Sir Howel,
Kinsman of Arthur, unto whom was given
Lordship in Brittany ; that noble knight,
The greatest of the sons of Pellinore,
Sir Lamorak de Galis, to be slain
By Gawain's evil brethren traitorly ;
And, of a semblant frank and debonair,
Hiding an envious treason in his heart
Which yet had found no outlet, Honolan.

Never a fairer host was seen to pass
Over the Severn, journeying towards the south.
Two days they traveled over hills and slopes,
Through forests and wide laundes, by shining
streams,
And on the third day, in the blaze of noon,

Rode into Carnant, walled and towered and spired,

King Erbin's capital city, where he lay
In a strong fortress till his son should come.

Then were bells rung in gladness and the folk
Shouted and wept for joy, and crowded close
To touch the housings of Geraint's destrier,
Crying that their own prince was come again.

And through streets hung with tapestries and scarves

Of coloured silks, and banners of the king,
And strown with reeds and mint and iris-flower,
Geraint and Enid with their train of knights
Passed to the fortress, where King Erbin gave
To all a royal welcome, to his son
Honours and blessings, and to that son's wife,
Whom then first he beheld, a father's love,
Not only for her peerlessness of charm,
But for her noble clarity of soul;
And ever he loved her as his own fair child,
And ever in her he had exceeding pride.

Then upon Erbin's foes Geraint made war,
Swift and retributive, and vanquished them,
Back-drove the fierce aggressor, the desire
Of the covetous plucked from him, and restored
The boundaries of the kingdom. And with
peace

Came order and prosperity where had been

Confusion and disaster, and the realm
Felt the protection of the governing hand,
And knew the kingly blood was warm again.
And Erbin, of the great pride which he had
In his son's warriorhood, transferred to him
Daily such added power that he became
Virtually, if not in name, the king,
And vassals from far corners of the land
Journeyed to do him homage as their lord.
And like a generous man, Geraint enriched
His friends, his nobles, and his gathering court
With jewels and arms and steeds from Araby,
And won a name for largesse, and renown
As a most princely knight and knightly prince.
And he let cry great tournaments, wherein
He battled as the least conspicuous knight,
And often masked his shield, that he might have
No vantage from his name or from his fame,
And all who came against him overbare;
And when, at each day's closing, pursuivants
Would bid the disguised champion unhelm,
That so the victor of the field be known,
Behold, it was Geraint! Thus, while his friends
Rejoiced in his unfaltering force and skill,
And Enid gloried in her matchless knight,
And Arthur, in his palace to the north,
Heard, and was gladdened by the noble tale,
The prince's fame increased, until at last,
In all the Devonrealm remained no man

Who dared oppose the arm of such renown.
And then a change grew over Prince Geraint.

For as the mantle of the months was spread
In riper, tawnier colours, and the grass
At every roadside whitened with the fire
And wasting weight of summer, in his halls
Geraint began to linger easefully,
For a time seeking minstrelsy and games ;
And found a pleasure in the tumblers' skill,
Their leapings and their twistings, in the tilts
At chess and tric-trac, and a new delight
In the melodious languor of the viol,
And psaltery and cithern, harp and rote,
To which, in lowered voices, minstrels sang
The lays of lovers of the long ago.
And afterwards, resurgent, with each day
More mighty, in his soul so strong a tide
Of love for his fair wife began to rise
That all his life was compassed by that love,
And merged and utterly resolved in love —
With Enid only, knew he any joy,
To Enid only, did he give a thought,
And all his hours he spent with her alone.
And for the sake of her companionship,
His harpers and his tumblers and his games
He heard and saw no more ; the noble sport
Of hunting, and the knightly exercise
Of joust and tournament he did forgo ;

And for his nobles' good will had no care,
Forsook his princely duties, and turned away
The hearts of all the host of all his court.

Wherefore, while over-fast the summer aged
To autumn's pathos of impermanence,
While in the fretful winds of afternoon,
Recurrent, a crescent minor wailed
And died away and swelled and wailed again,
Beginning to intone the time-old dirge
For all the beauty that ere long must die,
Like to the wind, but with more rapid wing,
A rumor breathed across King Erbin's realm,
At first the merest whisper, of which none
Could tell the origin, save Honolan;
But passed from ear to ear, from tongue to
tongue,
Gathering to more than whisper, at the last
Blew with such violence that every churl
On Erbin's farthest marches knew the tale,—
How Prince Geraint had turned him recreant,
How all his glorious force had fallen from him,
How, from excessive love for his fair wife,
The Prince of Many Battles had declined
Into a silken lingerer in a bower,
Sunk in a shameful lethargy, and content.
And in unlowered voices, men began
To jeer and scoff at him, to make his name
A jest and soon a hissing, and to cry

Out against Enid as the cause of all.
And Arthur, in his palace to the north,
Heard, and lamented for his peerless knight;
And Erbin heard and sorrowed for his son;
And Enid heard and saddened for her lord,
Tormented by unreasoning self-reproach;
But Prince Geraint heard nothing, lost in love.

And Erbin said to Enid on a day,
“It is not thy will, daughter, that our prince
Forsake his name and fame for love of thee?”
“Nay, sire,” said Enid, sadly, “I do swear
Nothing more hateful is to me than this.”
“Upon thee, then, my daughter, does it rest
To tell the prince what people say of him,
And rouse him to his knighthood once again.
From thy lips will he hear it gentlest.”
And Enid bowed her head in mute assent.
And with each dawn that followed, she resolved
To tell Geraint all ere the night should come;
But such a dread she had of paining him,
And such a delicacy of saying aught
That would mean disapproval or dispraise,
That each night fell to find all still untold.
But what with the great love she had for him,
And her great dolour for his lost renown,
What with the anguish of her self-reproach,
And the continual conflict with herself,
The brightness of the colour in her cheek

Faded to pallor, and the shining light
Of joy passed from her face, and to her eyes
A shadow came, darkening day by day.

This change, so causeless seeming, Prince Geraint

Perceived, and at it wondered, much distressed.
Yet thinking that perchance some proof of love
Had been by him omitted, which, though slight,
Might be dear to a woman, he took pains
To be still more the lover, to devise
A hundred new ways to insure her joy;
But maugre all his care — nay, as he thought,
The more for all his care — he saw his wife
Sadden and whiten with each added day.

At last one undertide, when the long beams
Of sunlight, slanting through the pallid gold
Of leaves just touched with autumn, on the floor
Of Enid's bower a patterned shadow cast
Through the tall, painted casement, as they sat
And watched the shifting of the coloured glow,
And she was pale and quiet, speaking not,
He rose and came to her, and took the face
He loved between his hands, and said to her:
“So sad, so pale, my Enid! Why so sad?
Thou knowest how well I love thee. Enid —
thou —
Dost thou not love me, Enid, any more? ”

To which she answered, " Yea, so very well!"
Yet drew away, and could not look at him,
For in her heart she thought: " *Do I* love
well?

If I loved well would I not have the strength
To tell him what the people say of him,
Even, though doing so, I wounded sore?
True love is strong; my love is weak, weak,
weak!

I fear my love is not as true love is!"
For this, her eyes were downcast, and her face
Avert, her manner conscious and constrained.
But to Geraint, who could not understand,
There came an apprehension undefined,
A sharp and sudden pang of formless dread;
And with her words he was unsatisfied.
And half in sorrow, half in wrath, he turned
And left the bower, and while the palace-folk
Gave silent place before him and exchanged
Curious glances at his gloomy brow,
He passed to a fair pleasaunce, cool and green,
Hedged in with hawthorns and with beeches
white;
And there, upon the velvet of the turf,
In a fierce restlessness paced to and fro.

Thither came Honolan, most curious
Of all the curious watchers in the hall.
" My lord," he said, " I know not if I come

Welcome or most unwelcome, but I saw
The pain upon thy countenance and feared
Some heavy evil had befallen thee;
And having thy well-being at my heart
Always, I thought to learn what woe is thine.”
To which Geraint made answer with a groan
Only, saying no word; but unabashed,
Sir Honolan continued: “ Nay, my prince,
Why keep thy grief from me? Less hardly
borne
Is sorrow that is shared with some true friend.
And am I not of kindred soul with thee
Even as of one blood? Shall kindred hopes
And dreams not make me worthy of thy trust?”
“ I fain would think so,” answered Prince Ge-
raint;
“ Yea, I do think so, friend. But even to thee
I am not certain should I speak of this—
And yet, why not? I am half-mad with doubts,
Questions which have no answers. What hath
chanced
To make my wife so changed — so wan of hue,
So saddened of demeanour? More than life,
Than all life gives, I love her, as God knows!
And in all ways have sought to prove my love!
Why do I hear her sighing in the day?
Why have I heard her weeping in the night?
What reason can there be for such a change?”

Then smiled Sir Honolan, and in the smile
Was that at which Geraint cried suddenly,
“Thou knowest the reason! Speak! What
dost thou know?”

But with a feigned disquiet, Honolan,
Stammering, said, “My lord, command me not!
I do but hazard guesses — wide, perchance.
I pray thee ask me nothing.” But Geraint
In one great fear returned, “What knowest
thou?”

“Nothing I know,” said Honolan, “but this —
If I must speak — this any one would think:
When ladies weep, whose lords are by their side,
Whose lords, unwavering tender care,
Do set their every hope to pleasing them,
To gratifying each small wish unnamed —
In such fair circumstance when ladies weep,
Perchance — I only say perchance, my lord,—
They then beweep one absent.”

And Geraint

Stopped in his restless motion like a man
Who, in the rout of battle, feels the quarrel
Drive to the heart and turn him into stone.
And it came to him he should slay this man,
Like any unclean thing that drags its slime
Across the good, the bright, the beautiful;
And to his shame he knew he could not slay,

For both his arms were nerveless and unpowered,
His will, no stronger than a broken reed;
And well he realized that this was due
Not to the words in their self-singleness,
But to the fact they closed so perfectly
With that fierce, formless doubt, which, having
had
No import and no object, now had both.

“Thou meanest then —” and like a weight the
pain
Dragged at his speech —“What meaning,
Honolan?
Stay, tell me not! I know too well, too well!
And though because thy lips could form those
words,
I think I should have slain thee with my hands,
I must learn more. Who is the man she loves?
Can thy guess cover him? ”

“ Mayhap not, lord;
But I can name thee one who sighs for her,
As I dare swear,— one who in Arthur’s court
Is called the favorite minstrel, Alarin
The Faery-son. Hear while I tell thee that
To which mine eyes were witness. Dost recall
How, when returning from the very quest
Which gave thee thy fair lady, in the wood

Beyond Caerleon, Alarin and I
Met you two coming? Well I call to mind
Thy joy in love and in thy joy mine own!—
Three years agone, three years! But I delay:
When 'round the sudden turn of the wood-path,
Ye twain came riding through the sunlit glade,
At that first sight of thy sweet lady's face,
How tense and hueless did our minstrel grow,
Like one who hath a vision in his soul!
How he did stare and stare! How pluck the
strings
Of his forgotten harp until one brake,
Whirring, beneath his hand! What look was
his!—
Oh, never men look so save they do love!
All this, my prince, saw I to my great grief.
Ay, and the song he sang that very night
When ye were wed! He had sung otherwise
Before *my* bridal-board, I warrant thee!
But thou, my lord, so deep in thy new love—
How couldst thou see the double meaning in
it?—
Love's House, built unto him, not unto thee!"

But all the while a passion of remorse
Tortured Geraint; the words that fell so fast
And glibly evil from the other's tongue,
The very name of him toward whom had leaped
His jealousy's first impulse — though he heard,

He heard them as far sounds that matter not,
So dwarfed their brief significance was made
By his own sense of overwhelming shame,
In listening to what was surely false,
In hearkening to a slander on his wife.
And desperately he answered, like a man
Who would convince himself before all men:
“ It can not be! She is too good, too fair,
Too gentle to be touched by any sin!
Mire could not cling to her white purity!
We wrong her, I and thou, by dreaming it.
But mine is the immeasurable shame —
I am her husband and her lover too —
I never should have hearkened to a tale
Wherein truth can not be! ”

“ Yea, even so,”

Said Honolan, “ I have not called it truth;
I were as grieved as thou to have it proved.
My love for thee, and thine insistence, lord,
Only, urged me to speak and tell thee that
Which at the least is certain — he loves her;
That she loves him I make no certainty,
And fain were I to think it most untrue.
But this I know, as thou must also know,
That three years work a change in many a
dame,
And harp-skilled fingers and a tuneful voice
And words of faery melody have power

To bring the marriage-vow to pliancy;
And singing she loves always, as all know.
How often he sang to her! I have marked
At the great festivals, how, when he sang,
He might have been alone with her, so plain
It was the song was meant for her alone!
But thou, my lord, saw'st nothing, being in
love."

And when Geraint said no word in reply,
Gazing in moody silence at the ground,
Sir Honolan went on, his voice more low,
More soft, and with a covert malice in it:
" And after all, my prince, what is this sin?
Hath it not grown so common in these years
It scarce is held a sin now any more?
There is most noble precedent, my lord.
What of the wife of Sir Segwarides,
That good Earl of the South? And what of
her,
Our Arthur's sister, wife to Uriens
Of Gore, Queen Morgan, loved by Accolon,
And by how many others since his time?
And Mark of Cornwall — can his kinglihood
Avail to keep Isoud from Tristram's arms?
And if we closelier come upon the throne,
What do men say of Guenevere the Queen,
Whose friendship thou didst suffer for thy
wife —

Nay, didst encourage, lord? She, too, is fair,
And once, I trow, was leal; yet every child
That prattles of the great ones of the land
Links Guenevere with Lancelot! And last,
Is there no shadow on the throne itself?
What of that tale of Arthur's earlier days,
Whereof the wise man said a curse was born
To blast the realm with ruin to an end? —
Of Arthur and the lady with four sons,
To whom a fifth —”

“Enough!” cried Prince Geraint,
“Say no more, Honolan! Too much is said
Already, and by far! I know the tale,
Know all the tales thou tellest! — What of
them?
Do they degrade my Enid to their fen?
Rather do they exalt her to the sun,
Her light of purity do magnify!
My doubt is done, my manlessness is gone;
I swear she is as stainless and as true
As when I found her in her father's hall,
A maiden with her soul bright in her eyes.
I will believe no falsity in her
Until her own sweet lips proclaim it so!
And had I the most faint distrust of thee,
Did I suspect that thou wouldest spread this lie,
Wouldst breathe a word of it to any one,
I promise I should slay thee — yea, and should

Though brotherhood stood in our cousinship!
I trust thee; give thou me no cause for doubt!"

And in a storm of self-wrath Prince Geraint
Strode from the pleasaunce back to Enid's
bower;
And found her there as he had left her — still
And pale and very silent — yet so fair,
Of such unequalled purity of line,
That looking at the beautiful, white brow,
Sorely he blamed him for his lack of faith,
And in remorseful tenderness took oath
That never would he doubt her any more.
But that same night, as Honolan had known,
The dread incertitude would rise again
Despite the strongest setting of his will;
And all the vague suspicions and the fears
And questions he could not explain aside
Returned to his tormenting, and he lay
With neither sleep nor peace the long night
through,
And not until the dawning slept at last.

But as the morning mounted in the east,
The ripe autumnal sunshine, amber-hued,
Streamed through the windows, rich with im-
agery,
Full on the couch of Enid and Geraint.
And Enid woke and saw the counterpane

Had slipped from off the prince's breast and arms,
And bending over him, while still he slept,
She gazed upon the sinewed brawn of breast
And on the mighty muscles of his arms,
Exulting in the grandeur of his mould.
And then she seemed to hear the busy tongues
Calling him recreant, in endless tales
Of his unknightly lethargy and sloth;
And all the gladness died within her heart,
And all at once she wept and lowly said:

“ How like a noble weapon is my lord!
Like some rare glaive of finest-tempered steel,
Which often in the fray hath tried its edge,
And never brake nor turned nor showed a flaw! —
Yet now in idleness is rust-consumed!
Ah, God forgive me! Am I not the rust
That hath consumed the valiance of my lord? —
That makes him think no more of plunging steeds,
Hauberk and pluméd helm, and blazoned shield,
Driving of spear, sword-clanging, clapping hands,
And gree of tourney, and all the glory of it?
Through love of me is my great prince unmanned,
Shorn of his honour, from his height is fallen,

And given for a prey to evil tongues.
The people call him recreant, but I —
I am the recreant! To me is due
The blame, the shame for loss of his renown!
And having wrought this treason, do I speak
To rouse him to his knightlihood again?
To tell him how in every laggard's talk
His hand is grown too weak to hold the sword,
His valour, thinned to craven apathy?
To remedy my treason, do I speak? —
Ay me! Ay me! Thus am I false indeed!"

And by a most unhappy circumstance,
Her tears fell on his breast, and he awoke
And found her weeping, and her last sad words
Rang in his ears, "Thus am I false indeed!"
And all the evil speech of Honolan,
And all his own suspicions and his fears
Boiled upward in his mind and seemed confirmed.
And power to reason that if she *were* false,
She had not so confessed it, he had none;
But like one mad he flung him from the couch
And stared at her, and like a madman cried,
"So, from thy very lips I learn a truth
I might have learned from others, had I thought
To put a credence in it!" Then he turned
And shouted to his squire, "Be quick! My
horse,
My arms, my lady's palfrey — ready them

With all the haste thou canst!" And to his wife
He spake with harsh command: "Do thou arise,
Array thee, for we go adventuring!—
What matter whither, so that we be gone?
So that I take thee far from courts and halls?
For I will root these fancies from thy heart,
And drive these wishful memories from thy soul,
And I will have thee with me till I die!"
And then a devil seemed to rise in him,
Prompting his words, for with a bitter smile
He added, "And if on this quest I die,
What grief to thee? Easier then to seek
The company of him for whom thou weepest!"
But Enid, though in sorrowful amaze
Stung by the taunt she could not understand,
Met his gaze steadily: "My lord Geraint,
Thy meaning is a hidden thing to me."
And though he would have answered, "Search
thy heart
For meaning!" the clear look within her eyes
Stayed his reproach, for in his soul he knew
Never a guilty woman could look so.
And fain would he have taken her in his arms,
And all their misery had ended then;
But such a storm of wrath and pride and shame
Possessed him that he could not, and he cried:
"I said, array thee! Do I speak in vain?"

Array thee in thy poorest, oldest gown,—
Ay, even the satin one I saw thee wear
When first I found thee in the ancient hall.
Three years thou hast not worn it. Don it
now,
And come with me!"

And mutely Enid went
And took the worn robe from the cedrine chest,
And shook the flowers-of-balsam from the folds,
And put it on, and the squire armed Geraint.
Then silent each to other, they went forth
Into the castle-courtyard, filled with folk
Wondering at the story which was rife.
And much of marvel at the prince's arms,
At Enid's strange, worn raiment, at the dole
On either's face, the knights and ladies made;
But to Geraint none dared to say a word —
Not even Honolan — so black he looked.
But thither came King Erbin, and he said
Full sorrowfully, "My son, what doest thou?
Wilt thou ride forth with neither knight nor
squire?

Beyond our borders is a perilous land;
Wilt thou endanger Enid and thyself?
For thy wife's sake go not unretinued!"
But Geraint answered, "Sire, it is my will.
I pray thee do not seek to alter it."
And with no further word, he set his wife

Upon her dappled palfrey, he himself
Mounted his bay destrier of Gascon breed,
And from the palace-gates they went the way
Which led to the great wilderness of the west.
And Geraint said to Enid: “ Do thou ride
Before me always by a furlong’s half,
And whatsoever thou mayest see or hear,
Saving I speak to thee, speak not to me! ”
And sadly she rode on as she was bid.

And in such wise did they depart from home;
And all that from the courtyard watched them
go
Had but one thought, “ They go unto their
death! ”

II

THE noon had passed, and a grey bank of cloud,
Rapidly mounting from the hazy south,
Slipped o'er the westering sun, and spread be-
yond

Till all the heaven was mantled in dull grey,
And all the landscape darkened. And a wind,
Uprising, momently increased in force,
And with a low, wild wailing swept across
The waste wherethrough rode Enid and Ge-
raint.

For Erbin's marches they had left behind,
Long since the mellow harvest-fields had passed,
The orchards, red and golden with ripe fruit,
And all the peace and plenty of that fair realm;
And now they rode in one vast, dreary plain,
Where evenly on all sides the leaden sky
Came down to the flat launde, with never break
Of hill nor tree on which the eye could rest;
Where nothing thrrove save thorny clumps of
gorse,

And sweeps of heather powdered grey with dust;
Where not a sound there was but of the wind,
Crying of desolations and of death.

And unto Enid, riding far before,

Half-sick with loneliness and wounded love,
The grey monotony of earth and sky
And the funereal music of the wind
Became as an oppression, and grew and grew
To horror definite, until at last
Hardly could she refrain from riding back
And crying to Geraint that they were
doomed —
That they were caught between this sky and
plain,
That they must ride forever upon this waste,
Forever see the angry heaven lower
Evenly to the launde, forever hear
The wailing, the unearthly threne of wind! —
But she rode on with neither cry nor word.

But deaf to wind, and blind to earth and sky,
Conscious alone of memories that rent
His mind with living torture, rode Geraint.
Ever his thoughts went wandering to the
past,—
A ruined hall, a ruddy sunset glow,
A song down-floating through the violet dusk,
A maiden of the fairness of a fay!
And he had sworn to love the maiden well,
To care for her as no man else could care,
However worthier! He had invoked
A punishment from Heaven should he fail
But once in his great love's true tenderness! —

Then would he look where Enid rode before,
And in remorseful anguish groan aloud.
Another picture: ivy, and the white,
Closed blooms of honeysuckles, and the dawn
Shining in misty silver on a court
Changed by Love's miracle into a shrine!
And he, with soul exalted, had taken vow,
By conduct ever nobler, knightlier,
To prove Love's grace was not too ill bestowed,
To prove, so far as any might deserve
Such grace, he would deserve it by his life!
Then did he *know* that Honolan had lied! —
But why, but why, "Thus am I false indeed"?
And not as knight-at-arms would think to ride,
With head bowed on his breast, with body limp,
Sunk forward in the saddle, rode Geraint
Through unrecked hours of waste and grieving
wind.

At last, above the launde, Enid beheld
The far-off swaying of a shadowy line,
And nearer saw a tangled coppice-wood.
And gladly did her eyes rest on this break
In the flatness of the plain, and she rode on,
Watching the young trees bend before the wind.

Then was she ware that three armed horsemen
lurked
Close in the thicket-shadow, and as she drew

Nearer, the leader boasted to his men:
“Behold, two horses and armour and a girl
Come to us for the taking! Yonder knight —
What man of spirit is he, that he hangs
His head so heavily and rides behind?
Easy to vanquish him, and mine the right
To attack him first, seeing I saw him first.”

And Enid heard and on her fell great fear.
And she looked back and saw how Prince Geraint
Did ride indeed with head sunk on his breast,
Seeing and hearing nothing; and she thought,
“He will be slain for he is off his guard!
Before he can couch lance he will be slain!
And yet he has forbidden me to speak!
But herein is no silence; I *must* speak!”

And swiftly she rode back and spake to him:
“My lord, three horsemen wait in yonder copse,
And I have heard them plan thine overthrow.”
Then wrath with her it was not, but self-wrath
Which made of her its victim, that caused Geraint
To answer irritably, “Did I command
Thy warning or thy silence? Did I say
Speak, or speak not, saving I speak to thee?
But ride apart, for yonder comes the first.”

Hardly had Enid ridden to one side,
When, with lance couched, upon spur-maddened
steed,
The bandit leader rushed upon Geraint.
But while against the prince's shield, his lance
Shivered, Geraint's brake not, but with such
force
Struck on the center of the other's shield,
That wood and leather — ay, and mail be-
neath —
Alike were riven, and to a cubit's length
The spear passed through the body, and when
withdrawn,
Down from his plunging horse the foeman fell
And in a rush of blood his life outflowed.
Whereat the other horsemen both at once
Couched lances and bare down upon Geraint.
And at the golden eagles aimed the first,
But his arm wavering, the lance went wide,
And ere he could recover, such a blow
Geraint dealt on his helm that in a swoon
To earth he hurtled and lay as he were dead.
And fearful lest the fate of his two friends
Be also his, the third knight turned and fled
For shelter towards the coppice, but Geraint,
Pursuing, overtook him, and on the shield
Struck him so mightfully that from his horse
The bandit fell and lay a moment stunned,
Then rose and fled on foot, at which the prince,

Scorning to follow, suffered him to escape.
But the three horses of his vanquished foes
Geraint bound all together by their reins,
And gave the reins to Enid, saying to her,
“ Ride onward now and drive these steeds be-
fore ;
And say no word, but if I speak to thee ! ”
And forward through the plain she drove the
three ;
And one was black, and one was white, and one
Was dapple-grey.

They passed the coppice-wood,
Journeying towards the swaying, shadowy line.
And slowly into dusk the sad day waned,
And tightlier seemed the ominous sky to close
Down on the barren moors, and with the voice
Of all the souls in Annwyn cried the wind.
At length to Enid, straining through the gloom,
The line mysterious resolved itself
Into a forest of such vast extent
That neither end nor boundary could she see
Save on the side before her, and the trees
Loomed darkling to the heavens, and in the wind
She saw the mighty branches twist and writhe
Like limbs of tortured giants, and they seemed
To her the symbols of a woe to come.

Then was she ware that five armed horsemen
rode

Forth from the deeper shadows, and men of
might

She saw they were, stalwart and huge of frame,
Mounted on powerful chargers, and every man
Had shield in place and spear in battle-rest.

And nearer drawing, Enid heard one say :

“ Behold, at last a booty ! Five good steeds,
And better yet, a lady ! And no one
To guard them but yon craven of a knight,
Who, weaker than his woman, slinks behind ! —
Sir Dolourous, whom any boy could slay ! ”
To which another made a loud reply,
“ The lady we hold in common, but the
knight —

His life, his horse, his armour — shall be mine !
Wherefore I make requiring of you all,
That I be given the first encounter with him.”

Fearful indeed was Enid, hearing them.
And through the gloom she looked back to Ge-
raint,

And saw him bent above the saddle-bow,
Seeing and hearing nothing ; and she thought,
“ Surely will he be slain before mine eyes !
For he is wearied by the former fray,
And now, while off his guard, these five will come
Against him all defenseless ! Not to speak
Is but to join the five in slaying him ! ”

Then swiftly back along the bridle-path,
She drove the snorting horses, and she cried
In voice made shrill by fear, “ My lord, yon
knights

Purpose thy death ; I heard them plotting it.
And they are five and thou art only one ! ”

But angrily and bitterly Geraint
Smiled on her misery : “ And once again
My wishes go unheeded ! I declare
To Heaven that their purpose grieves me less
Than thy continual disobedience.
But ride apart : I battle with the first.”

Then down upon the prince the first knight
spurred ;

But never had Geraint’s hand been more firm,
His aim more sure and steady ! Swift and
hard

He smote the other’s shield, that ’neath the blow
It crumpled like old parchment, the lance flew
Far from his foeman’s grasp, his stirrups brake,
Wounded and senseless was he dashed to earth.
The second came, and furiously Geraint
Thrust the long spear-head through the ringéd
mail

Into his enemy’s neck, that the sharp blade
Protruded at the back, and when wrenched
forth,

Two spouting blood-streams washed the life away.

Then setting spurs to his own horse, the prince,
With thunder-sound of onset, met the third,
And dealt him such a blow upon the shield,
That from the shock both horse and man were
hurled

Backwards, flat to the earth, and though the
steed

Arose, the rider could not, crushed to death.
At which in fear, the two remaining fled,
Hoping to reach the forest; but Geraint
Pursued and overtook them, and his lance
Struck on the nearer's heavy shoulder-arms,
And cracked the armour, but the lance itself,
Strained in six former frays, brake to the haft.
Whereat both bandits drew their swords, and
both

Attacked the prince, who with his own true
glaive

Received them valiantly; and while the dark
Settled upon them and their figures grew
Indefinite in outline, that to her
Who watched with eyes dilated, now one seemed
Geraint, and now another, for a space
They did sharp battle, stroke and counter-
stroke,

Tracing, traversing, matching foyne with
foyne,

Until at last on one assailant's helm,
Geraint brought down so mightily his blade,
That helm and bone and brain alike were riven,
And stiffly, like a stone, the dead man fell.
And in a mortal terror the fifth knight
Slipped from his horse, his lance and sword and
shield
He flung away, and fell upon his knees,
And stretched his hands in suppliance to Ge-
raint,
Shrieking, “Thy mercy, lord!” And half in
scorn
And half in ruth according him the boon,
Geraint dismounted, took the other's lance,
Then caught the five great chargers, and all five
Binding together by the bridle-reins,
He gave the reins to Enid, saying to her:
“As with the three, so drive the eight before;
And though it seems my words have little
weight,
This time I charge thee with especial force,
Saving I speak to thee, speak not to me!”

Then in the moonless, black, wind-raving night
They entered that great forest and they rode
In murky labyrinths of shadowy trunks,
Just visible by trebled blacknesses.
And in their faces slanting sheets of rain
Were driven through the canopy of leaves;

And the night grew in violence, with the brief
Brilliance of lightnings, and long thunder-rolls ;
While often the deep forest found a tongue,
And spake in snap and crash of breaking
boughs,
And roar when roots gave way and giants fell,
Crushing their neighbors downwards in the fall.
And always in wild cadences that rose
And died away to swell to mightier sound,
Through twice ten thousand tree-tops the
storm-wind
Sang with stupendous music, voice of God,
Of all the world, of angels, or of Hell.

Then riding up to Enid's side, Geraint
Saw the great difficulty which she had
In driving the eight horses through the wood,
By reason of the maze of nebulous trunks,
And by the chargers' terror of the storm.
And insofar as wrath would suffer him,
The prince was moved to sorrow for her plight ;
And he said to her, "Lady, it is vain
To attempt going forward. It were best
To bide here till the dawn." "As thou wilt,
lord,"
Said Enid. And Geraint, dismounting, took
Enid down from her palfrey, and they sought
A refuge from the wind and from the rain
Beneath the branches of a huge old tree ;

And Geraint said, "Sleep, lady; I will watch."
"Nay, lord," made answer Enid, "thou art
worn

And battle-weary. Thou hast need for rest.
Sleep thou, and I will watch." And deeply
touched

He was by her concern and tenderness;
Yet such a tumult still of wrath and pride
Made riot in his heart, that not one word
Could he say in reply, and like one dumb
He lay down in his armour and he slept.
And neither food nor drink they had that night.
And all night long, the storm encompassing her,
While Geraint slept unmindful of the din,
Enid kept watch, and in her hands she held
The reins of the ten horses; but at last
In early morning, the rain fell no more,
And the wind died, and on the wood was peace;
And lifting tired eyes to the brightening sky,
With a wan gladness Enid saw the dawn
Come to the world, and the new dawn was fair.

Then in that first thin light Geraint awoke;
And he was startled by the weariness,
The pallor on Enid's face, and secretly
A great fear grappled him lest she should die.
But he said only, "Now shall we proceed."
And Enid said no word of her fatigue,
And of their hunger-faintness neither spake.

So they rode onward through the wood, in front
Enid with the eight chargers ; and they fared
By coverts dense and sapling-serried dells,
Where from close, leafy branches, the night's rain
Showered on them as they passed ; and much be-
held

Of ravage of the storm, in scattered limbs
And riven trunks and stalwart trees upturn.
And they rode on until the tempest-zone
They left behind, the débris saw no more,
And through a sparser growth they made their
way,

Until what time the sun had reached the height
Of the second hour, emerging from the wood,
They came unto a valley very fair.

And there they saw a shining river flow
On sands so yellow surely they were gold ;
And crystal-clear the water, that like jewels,
The many-coloured pebbles of the bed,
Bright in the depths, flung back the morning
sun ;

And by the rivage lacy willows grew,
Their slender leaves tinged with autumnal gold.
And on the river's farther side they saw
Ripe fields of grain, and reapers reaping it,
While far beyond arose the towers and spires
Of a fair city ringed with radiant walls.
And all the land lay shimmering in the haze

Of autumn's amber sunshine ; like a band
Of flowing gold and crystal was the stream,
Like fields of rippling gold, the feathery grain,
And seeming through the fall of glamourous
light

To tremble like a fleeting loveliness,
Fairer for evanescence, yonder towers
Were as a faery city, beautiful
Beyond the beauty earthly hands may build.

Down to the stream rode Enid and Geraint ;
And eagerly the horses bent and drank
Of the clear water. Then at a wide ford,
They crossed the river, by a lofty steep
Ascending to the fields of golden grain.
And there they met a young squire clad in
brown,
A leatherne satchel hanging from his neck,
A pitcher of bright blue within his hand,
Upon the pitcher's mouth, a bright blue bowl,
Around the rim whereof a cordon ran
Of small, white, dancing figures, youths and
maids.

With courtesy the squire saluted them.
“ May Heaven prosper thee,” replied Geraint,
“ And pray, whence comest thou ? ” “ I come,”
he said,
“ From yonder shining city. And thou, lord —

Were it presumptuous in me to ask
Whence thou art come?" "Nay, friend," re-
turned the prince,
"We came through the great forest." "Not
to-day

Have ye traversed that forest. It must be
Ye spent last night therein." "Ay, even so."
"Then neither food nor drink ye had, I ween.
But in this pitcher is a sweet red wine,
And in this satchel have I meat and bread.
Wherefore, my lord, take now a meal from me
And do me honour." "Gently said, young sir,
But will no one go hungered?" asked Geraint.
"The reapers, yea; but gladly will I fetch
Another breakfast for them. Do thou eat,
And thy fair lady whom I see so pale."
"We will," returned Geraint, "and Heaven re-
ward
Thy thoughtful courtesy!"

Whereat the prince
Dismounted and took Enid from her horse.
And they sat down, and skilfully the squire
Served them with bread and meat and sweet red
wine.
And a faint colour crept to Enid's cheek,
By which Geraint was gladdened. The meal
done,

The squire said with all deference, “ My lord,
If thou wilt now permit me, I will go
To fetch the reapers’ breakfast.” “ Yea, fair
youth,”

Replied the prince, “ go thou, and take for us
The city’s choicest lodging, and good space
Of stablement for the horses, and return
And so conduct us thither. And to requite
Thy service and thy gift, whichever steed
Pleases thee most, make choice of for thine
own.”

Then the squire flushed with pleasure, and he
sank

On one knee to Geraint: “ My lord, *thy* gift
Would amply pay ten services like mine.”
And choosing joyfully the dapple-grey,
He galloped to the city, and secured
The best and richest lodgings that he knew,
And stabling for the horses. Then he filled
His satchel once again with reapers’ fare,
His cruse with wine; and afterwards he went
Into the palace of his lord, Earl Dwinne,
And told him the adventure. “ I go now,
My lord,” he said, “ to squire them to the town,
This knight and his fair lady.” Spake the
earl:

“ Thou sayest the lady is so very fair?
Conduct them hither! I would welcome them,
And fitly entertain them in my hall.”

So the youth swiftly bare to Prince Geraint
The welcome of Earl Dwinne to court and hall.
But Geraint answered: “ Not to court nor hall
Will we go, by my faith! We know too much
Of halls and courts, and folk who loiter there!
Only to our own lodgings will we go;
And if Earl Dwinne would greet me, let him
come

And visit me; I will not visit him.”

Then went they to the city, and they had
Fair, roomy chambers, hung with scarlet silks,
And spread with green, new rushes. And the
seats,

Couches and tables were of carven oak,
Covered with silver damask. And Geraint
Said to the squire, “ Unarm me, friend, then go;
But eveningwards return to wait on me.”

Thereon the squire departed, and the prince
Spake unto Enid, “ If thou hast the need
Of service, call the woman of the house.”

“ I shall, lord,” answered Enid. And Geraint
Lay down upon a couch and soon he slept.
And Enid also slept, but brokenly,
Too over-wearied for a perfect rest.

So in late undertide the squire returned
To attend on Geraint, who bade him give
The landlord order that he make a feast
Of best and costliest fare, and that he ask

Whatever friends he would to come and be
The prince's guests. And princely was the
feast

Which Geraint held that night, choice was the
food,

Age-mellowéd the wine, and all was light
Of tapers and of torches, and the sheen
Of silver plates and chalices of gold.

But in the heart of Enid was small joy;
And she arose and left the glittering board,
And the gay company which heeded not,
And in the farthest corner of the room
Found a low bench, and there she sat alone.

Thereon behold, into the festival,
With twelve tall knights behind him, came Earl
Dwinne,

A slender, small gallant, too delicate
Of form and feature for a man, and pale
With the unhealthy pallor which long years
Of revelries and ranging lusts do give.
And with magnificence was Dwinne arrayed
In azure velvet with a dust of pearls,
His mantle, purfled with white ostrich plumes,
The scabbard of his sword, one blaze of fire
From rubies sewn in patterns of the rose;
And clad in yellow satin, his twelve knights
In scabbards of black damask ware their
swords.

Then Prince Geraint arose, and courteously
Welcomed the earl, who with an easy grace
Made fair rejoinder, “Heaven keep thee, lord.”
And even as he did so looked beyond,
And saw where Enid drooped, alone and sad.
Then in their precedence they all sat down
And lifted high the cups and drank, and ate.
And Dwinne made inquiry of the prince’s
quest —

The object of his journey — but Geraint
Was silent for a moment, and his brow
Darkened with the old cloud of jealous pain,
Ere briefly he responded: “I have none
Saving to seek adventures and to ride
Whither my humour leads me.” “Rightly said,
My lord!” cried Dwinne. “Chance purposes
are best!

Fixed purpose is a tyrant! To thy health
And good adventuring!” And all drank deep;
But none could drink more freely than the earl,
And none could jest more lightly, gailier sing
A drinking-song, and song and jest he made,
Until what with the glowing wine and lights
And ringing words and laughter, Prince Ge-
rant

Forgot his wrath and sorrow, entertained
So very well he was. And he saw not
How evermore the glances of the earl
Returned to rest on Enid; but she saw,

Blushing for shame at their unmasked desire.

So sped the time in joyance, till a troop
Of minstrels entered, bearing lute and harp
And violin, and sweetly played and sang.
Then, on a sudden thought, Dwinne seized a
lute
From out the player's hand, and touched the
strings
To low-toned, yearning music, and a song
He fashioned of the fleeting of delight:

“ Cull thou the day! How could I trulier sing
Than bidding every one who hears forbear
To waste the heart in futile questioning
After the riddled Whither and the Where,
Since than this moment is what goodlier thing?
Wherefore, Belovéd, mourn not utterly;
While Time shall last a little, love have we.

“ Grasp the sweet hour! Bethink thee, it will pass,
And what shall come hereafter no man knows;
Already the long shadows bar the grass,
Already creeps the witherance on the rose,
And swift the sands heap in the nether glass.
Wherefore thy smile, Belovéd, since the sheaf
Of years is small for joy, too small for grief.

“ Cling to the now! What madness to explore
With sightless eyes the unlit ways that wend
All to one blackness at the Future's shore!

That unto all things earthly is an end,
Of this alone is certainty; wherefore
Give me delight, Belovéd, since the day
Comes soon when all delight shall pass away."

Then for a moment the bright revelry
Was clouded with a sadness, which Earl Dwinne
Shattered with laughter, crying, "Truth in
wine!

And therein let us drown it! Know the
truth —
Ay, speak the truth — but drown the truth in
wine!"

And once again they lifted high their cups,
And each man pledged his neighbor, and they
drank,

And the wine filled their veins with flowing fire
And beat within their temples; and they drank,
Finding in wine forgetfulness of the song.

But Enid thought, "Why sing the song to
me?"

And when all were their merriest, the earl
Said to Geraint, "Wilt thou permit me, lord,
To speak with yonder lady? For thy sake
I fain would lay my service at her feet."

"Gladly, fair friend," replied the prince, and
Dwinne,
Thanking him, went and sat by Enid's side;

And two spear-lengths they were from Prince Geraint.

And under cover of the clamorous tongues
And strains of manifold music, speaking low,
Said Dwinne to Enid: "Hearing the song I
sang,

Thou knewest it was for thee. Thou only art
My soul's desire in whom is my delight!"
But Enid, with sweet statelihood and grace,
Though paling at the lust in his regard,
Answered, "My lord, thou doest thyself a
wrong

No less than me, in uttering such words
To which I will not hearken in any wise."

Said Dwinne, "Consider well! Rather wouldst
thou

Then, lady, follow a man who loves thee not
Than bide with one who loves thee as his life?"
But Enid, though the words smote on her heart
With forceful pain, responded, "With my lord
Rather would I go always — with my knight,
My first love and my last, who loves me well —
Yea, spite of all, I know he loves me well!"

Whereto said Dwinne: "Nay, is his love so
great?

His treatment of thee sounds another tale.
Thou art a gentlewoman, reared to rank

And tenderest usage, and of feature fair
Beyond my thought of women. Not for thee
Should paths be rough and wounding; yet this
man

Drags thee perforce upon an aimless quest,
That hath no profit but only peril in it,
And to the pressure of any evil chance
Subjects thee needlessly, just at his will!
But I would guard thee in fair pleasaunces,
Laced in with roses yellow as the sun,
And make thy life no heavier than a dream
Couched upon swan's-down, balmed with musk
and myrrh.

He loves thee well! Yet silken stuffs of green
Are in his coat and surcoat; green and gold,
The plumes upon his helmet; and his mail
Is of a triple steel inwrought with gold.

Oh, never knight-at-arms more gay than he!—
And never beggar-woman, more than thou!
But I will clothe thee in the finest vair
The furriers have for queenhood; cisclatons,
Scarlets and Alexandrian brocades—
All these shall be for thee when thou art mine.
Lo, how he loves thee! Neither youth nor maid
He gives for thine attendance; thine own hands
Must do each several task, however mean—
His lady to a serving-wench constrained!
But in my palace are there youths and
maids,—

A hundred, and not one but is most fair,
A hundred, and not one but gently born —
And all shall call thee ‘Lady,’ and be thine.
Leave him and come with me! I love thee so!
Thy hair is as a brightness to my soul
Whereto is seldom brightness! Stay with me,
And I will cherish thee for evermore!”

But Enid said: “ Shall I not go with him
In whom is my affiance and my trust,
For whom is all the love that I shall know?
These things thou sayest, O my lord, are true;
And why these things are true I can not tell;
And that these things are true drags at my
heart.

And yet because my love is such a strength,
With him must I go always to the end.
And since it is so, for thy knighthood’s sake,
Let us depart in peace!”

“ By God!” cried Dwinne,
And though his tones were low, his burning eyes
Consumed her with their passion, “ If I do,
Without one clasping of thy loveliness,
Then may my foemen slay me in my hall,
Mine earldom pass to strangers! Hearken
thou!
Thee I will have, won by whatever means!
Unarmed is yonder man; a single word —

My twelve knights flesh their swords within his
breast;
And while his head turns carrion on my walls —
A shuddering and a horror — thou shalt be,
Whether thou wilt or no, my latest bride,
The fairest of all ladies I have seen —
I never knew a face could be so fair.
But so thou comest to me willingly,
I will not slay this man, nor prison him:
He shall go free."

Then like to one who gropes
Through an enshrouding blackness, through his
words
Did Enid grope, already in her eyes
The vision of Geraint pale in his blood;
And only could she think, "He will be slain!
How shall my lord, unarmed, contend with
twelve?
Ay, were he armed, he would be slain by
twelve!"
And then her woman's wit devised a way,
And she made answer: "Lord, thy will is mine.
Come with the morrowning and take me hence.
But for to-night I pray thee let me be.
Small pleasure wouldest thou have of me to-
night;
For I am like to swoon of my fatigues,
For on me is a lethargy like death."

Arose Earl Dwinne and bowed and took his leave,
And all his knights went with him, with the rout
Of townsmen following, that so the room
Cleared quickly, and again they were alone,
Geraint and Enid. And because she thought,
“To speak now of the treachery of Dwinne
Were needlessly to rob my lord of rest,
Which he must have to battle with the foes
Who in these lands beset us everywhere,”
Enid said naught of peril at that time,
And wordlessly Geraint lay down and slept.
But lest she overlie the hour for flight,
Enid fought sleep, and noiselessly she placed
At Geraint’s side his armour, piece by piece,
As he should don it. And the night wore on,
And still she kept her vigil; but so tired
She was with dole and unaccustomed toils
That all unwittingly her head sank low —
She slept and dreamed, and in her dream she
seemed
To hear the beat of hoofs innumerable
Of fast-pursuing steeds and clang of arms;
And in affright she started up and stared
Wildly about, and saw the east was grey,
Slit with the red line of an angry dawn;
And down the stony streets the heavy carts
Went to bring in the harvest, rumbling loud
Upon the paving-stones,— the pound of hoofs

And din of arms which she had heard in dream.
Then smiling wanly at such fantasies,
She stole to Geraint's couch, and placed her
hand

Lightly upon his brow, awakening him,
And whisperingly she said, "Arise, my lord,
And arm thyself before it be too late."
And when he did so, wondering at her words,
She told him all the traitorous speech of Dwinne
And her own answer.

Quickly then Geraint,
Calling his host, required the reckoning.
"Thou owest me but little," said the man.
"Will seven chargers pay thee?" "Truly,
lord,
One were too much." "Take seven," said the
prince,
"And bring our own two horses to the door.
And wilt thou guide us to the city walls?
I would depart from town a different way
From that by which I entered." "Noble sir,
My will is but to serve thee," he returned.

So through the twilight of the tortuous streets
He guided them, and through the western gate,
From which outled a highroad. There Geraint
Dismissed him, saying: "Our great thanks,
good friend!"

Need of thy farther guidance have we none.
Farewell and Heaven keep thee!" "And keep
thee,
My lord, and thy fair lady!" said the host,
And left them, with a glad heart hastening
home.

But when he reached his house, surrounding it
He saw the twelve chief knights of the Earl
Dwinne,

Mounted on snorting horses, men and steeds
Clad all in heavy armour, and each knight
Bare a long lance of battle. And he saw
The earl's proud charger at the mounting-
stage,
Champing his golden snaffle. And the earl
Rushed from the entrance, crying, "They are
gone!"

Then saw the trembling landlord, ran to him,
With sword uplifted forced him to his knees:
"Thou villain, didst thou suffer them to es-
cape?"

"Ah, my lord earl, I had no word from thee
That I restrain them." "Which way did they
go?"

"Forth by the western highroad." And Earl
Dwinne

Into his saddle sprang, dashed deep the rowels,
Brandished his naked sword above his head,
And shouting "Follow!" at a speed that recked

Nothing of others' lives nor of his own,
Galloped through street and square and gate,
and rode
Until far in the distance he beheld
Two moving figures, Enid and Geraint ;
And his own shout of triumph was twelve times
Multiplied as his knights rushed to the prey.

And Enid, by Geraint's will riding first,
Heard the fierce clamor, distance-thinned yet
clear ;
And looking back she saw a dust-cloud roll
Rapidly down the highroad, and the forms
Of furious riders loomed within the mist,
Their armour glinting fitfully. Then in dread
Greater than aught she yet had known, she
turned
And rode back to Geraint, crying aloud,
“ My lord, my lord, defend thee, for they come !
The host of Dwinne will hew thee to thy
death ! ”

And suddenly Geraint wheeled his destrier
To face his foes and feutred fast his lance.
And in the moment on him seven knights
Bare headlong, captained by the seneschal
Of the earl's household. But the mighty
charge
Steadfastly he received, that like a wave

Which hurls its thunderous volume on a rock,
And can not move it, and the wave is split,
And all its force is spent in impotent spray
Which swirls and eddies harmlessly beyond,
They split upon his firmness and swirled by,
But leaderless, for at his stirrup dragged
The seneschal, face downwards in the dust.
And Geraint wheeled and spurred into the midst
Of the returning seven, and with seven
At once he did engage, thrilling with lance,
Slashing with pitiless sword, that evermore
They yielded ground before him, for like those
About whom olden legends hang, he fought —
Like Eldol, Earl of Gloucester, with the blades
Of treachery contending, or like him
Before whose single sword battalions fell,
Rhuawn, the chief of kings. So fought Ge-
raint

Till of the seven only three remained
To fight ever again, and gaping wounds
They had, all three, and in a common fear
They quailed beneath the warrior's circling
sword,
And cowered before the eagles on his shield,
And fled back to their master.

Then the wrath
Of Dwinne was changed to fury. Hard he
drove

Into his charger's side the maddening spur
And whirlwind-violent lashed upon Geraint.
But like the slenderest reed by autumn meres
His lance brake on the prince's stubborn shield,
Splintering to his fingers, while Geraint's,
Mightfully thrust and surely, cleft in twain
The attacker's shield, rent wide his useless mail,
Entered his body to a mortal hurt,
And with a sharp scream Dwinne threw out his
 arms
And fell from his horse, dead. Whereat his
 knights,
Wounded and those unwounded, flung away
Their weapons, and dismounting, came and
 knelt
Before the victor, saying, "Mercy, lord!"
And merciful was Geraint, and rode aside
And said to Enid, "Do we now proceed."
So on the highway they rode forth again.

But sadly, with much weeping, did the knights
Place their dead master on a shield's reverse,
And bear him to his city. Thus died Dwinne,
By his own lorded passions slain at last,
Earl Dwinne, yet in the summer-flush of youth.

III

WITH a fierce brightness the autumnal sun
Blazed at an hour to noon, when, journeying
fast

Along the highroad, Enid and Geraint
The slain earl's ultimate marches overfared,
And saw below them a low range of hills,
Green, greenish-brown, and tending into grey.
These climbing, from the summit they beheld
A valley fair and wide, of fertile fields
Russet and gold with harvest, wherein folk
Reaped grain or gathered fruits, and through
the vale,

Rushing and roaring like a storm, a stream
Tumbled the liquid thunder of a flood
Hued black and livid by the sombre rocks
Of its deep bed. And windingly the road
Descended to the valley, there in twain
Dividing, of which one, with gradual grade,
Ribboned the low flank of the farther hills;
Whereas the other, level, broad and straight,
Ran to a bridge of heavy masonry,
Spanning the river, and above the bridge,
Upon the opposite side of that dark stream,
They saw a fair, strong castle, massive-walled,

High-towered and widely-moated, and they
thought
No man had builded better than the lord
Who reared this so fair fortress.

Then they rode
Down from the hill-top and approached the
place

Where the two highways parted, and they saw
A peasant toiling in a field close by,
Sheaving the grain. To him spake Prince Ge-
raint:

“ Tell me, I pray thee, who thy liege lord is,
Lord likewise of this valley and of yon towers.”
“ A king, Guivre the Little,” said the man,
“ And a most valiant champion. Wherefore,
sir,

I warn thee shouldst thou choose the lower road
And cross the bridge and ride beneath his walls,
Thy lot were like to be disgrace and shame,
Since every knight who comes upon his lands
He forces to a combat, and not one
But in the end must yield him to my king.”
“ Nevertheless, by that way will I go,”
Replied Geraint, and Enid riding first,
They crossed the bridge and passed beneath the
towers.

But when they had proceeded a short space,

The thud of iron-shod hoofs smote on their ears,
A voice behind them cried, “Oh, keep thee, knight!
For thy presumption shalt thou dearly pay,
Daring to enter these forbidden lands!”
And Geraint, turning, set his lance in rest.
And lo, upon a war horse great and strong,
Dark bay in colour, nostrils scarlet-wide,
A knight who ware above his shining mail
A silken surcoat of the colour of Inde,
Rushed towards him, and the prince had never seen
A man of smaller stature than this knight.
And at such fearful pace the charger came
That finer than a millstone grinds the corn,
He ground the stones beneath his clanging hoofs,
And sparks flew outward from him like a fire;
And backwards in the wind of that wild speed
Were borne the milk-white plumes of the knight’s crest
And the blue pennon streaming from his lance;
And to the blazon on his dark blue shield,
An argent lion couchant, leaping life
Seemed by that headlong motion to be given.

Then Geraint spurred to meet him, and the shock

Of their encountering was so merciless
That both their steeds were beaten to the earth.
They rose and charged again, and yet again,
With iron-tipped lances gave such fearful
strokes,
Each to the other, that they rased away
The paintures and the colours from their
shields ;
And often through the leather and the wood
The sharp spears drove, through plate and in-
ner mail,
And pierced their bodies and made gaping
wounds ;
But always it was difficult for Geraint
To battle with the other, whose small size
Rendered sure aim scarce possible. They
fought
Until both horses fell upon their knees
From sheer exhaustion, and both knights were
thrown
Heavily to the ground. But they arose,
Despite their grievous hurts, and drew their
swords,
Hurtling together fiercely, and on foot
Fought stubbornly and long, until their shields
Shielded no more, but splintered wood become,
And fluttering rags of leather ; and their arms
Were crushed and hewed and hacked to the bare
flesh ;

And they swayed both with weakness, and the
light

Of the broad day grew darkness to their eyes,
And a red vapor of blood. And all the while
Enid looked on, with neither scream nor tear;

/ For past all ease of weeping was her woe,
And past all utterance. But on her face
Was a grey rigor like to naught save death,
And in her gaze, a straitness over-tense;
And ever one hand kept clutching at her throat,
Her fingers bruising red the soft, white flesh,
And she not knowing it.

So they fought long,
Till finally within the prince's mind,
Blood-clouded, pain-distorted, a dim thought
Unconsciously took form: "One stroke — my
last!

If good, I live; if not,—" and all his strength,
Or rather, the poor remnants of his strength,
Summoning to him, like a thrower of dice
Who stakes his all upon a single cast,
He lifted high his blade, and such a blow
Dealt on his foeman's helm that circlewise
The sword flew from the hand of the Little
King,
And dizzily he slipped down to his knees.

Then in the curious monotone of pain

Scarce bearable, yet borne without a sign,
Guivret said, "I am yolden to thy grace;
Of the fair fight the victory is thine."

To which, with mirthless smile, Geraint replied:
"Thereof hath no man victory. But of grace,
Guivret the Little, will I freely grant,
If thou wilt be mine ally, and engage
To fight against me never, but to bring
Me succor if thou hearest I have the need."

"This will I, gladly, lord," answered Guivret;
So pledged his faith. "And since my name to
thee

Is not unknown, right fain would I know thine."

"Geraint, the son of Erbin," said the prince;
"Geraint, a name of battles!" said the king;
"The bearer of the goodly eagle-shield,
Geraint, the sword of Devon! O my lord,
Come with me to Penévríc by the Stream,
Yon castle, which now owns thee for its liege.
There my two sisters, skilled in surgery,
Will cure our dolourous wounds." But Ge-
rant said,

"I thank thee, but I go upon my way."

Then Guivret looked at Enid, where she stood;
And grieved that one of her so noble mien,
That one so beautiful, should have such woe.
And he said to Geraint: "Thy course is
wrong,

My lord, yea, greatly wrong; if peril rise
Before thee in thy weakness and thy hurts,
What prospering canst thou hope?"

But wilfully

The prince responded, "I have answered thee."
And though his wounds bled deathfully, and the
throb
And ache of them was torture, he would do
Nothing but mount his horse, feutre his lance,
Abandon his unserviceable shield,
Bid Enid ride on first, and so depart;
While in a helpless pity for them both
Looked after them Guivre the Little King.

But on the highroad Enid and Geraint
Proceeded till they saw before them lie
A vast, deep forest. And the afternoon
Was like the height of summer for the close
Of stifling, windless heat; and for the blood
Which covered all his body like a pall,
The prince's armour cleaved unto his flesh,
And all his hurts pulsed with the fever-fire.
Wherfore most cool and grateful looked the
wood,
And entering it, they halted in the shade.

As they thus rested, suddenly from the wood
Shrilled forth a piteous wailing, and the voice

Was of a woman seeming crazed with grief.
“Lady, do we ride forward,” said Geraint,
“And learn what this betokens.” And they
rode,

Threading the dark, still thickets, and at last
Came to a grassy glade, wherein they saw
Two horses standing, one, a knight’s destrier,
The other, a lady’s palfrey. There behold,
Upon the trodden, blood-besprinkled grass,
His battered helm beside him, prostrate lay
A young knight in white armour, a mere boy
With yellow, curling hair, and he was dead.
And a young maid in a grey riding-dress
Knelt at his side, her eyes wildered with grief.
And ever and anon she flung herself
Upon the dead knight, kissing lips and hair,
Chafing his hands, beseeching him to speak,
With such exceeding weeping and such wails
That it was sorrow both to see and hear;
And Enid, looking, shuddered, for she thought,
“A day like this will come also to me!”

“Ah! Lady,” queried Prince Geraint in ruth,
“What hath befallen thee?” “My love is
slain!”

She moaned in answer; “Without cause is slain!
We journeyed to the court of King Guivret,
Where was to be our wedding on the morn;
But here two villains met us, giants both,

And both at once they set upon my love,
And without cause they slew him where he lies!"
Then in a generous anger sware Geraint,
"Slaying, they shall be slain! Where are they
now?"

"They went by yonder path, but he is dead!"
Then fell she to her dolour, and Geraint
Spake unto Enid: "Do thou bide with her,
Enid, for she is like to die of grief.
And when I have avenged her, I shall come."

So by the bridle-path he rode away;
And Enid in mute terror saw him go,
Thinking of his great wounds, the giants'
strength,
Quite certain that he never would return;
And smitten by the thought that but for her,
Even though all unwilling, but for her,
This hapless quest had never been begun.

And then she looked upon the girl, so young
And fair and in such sorrow, and her heart
Was stirred with pity poignant as a pain.
And she dismounted quickly, went to her,
Knelt by her, took her in her arms, and kissed
Her eyes and stroked her hair, and soothed, and
said

Sweet woman-words of comfort which she felt
Futile while uttering them. And the girl clung,
Her face to Enid's breast, and at the last

Grew very still and silent. "Can she sleep?"
Mused Enid, but up-turning the white face,
Drew back in a slow horror, for she slept
Indeed,— the sleep of death.

Meanwhile Geraint

Caught sight of the two murderers, and in
brawn
And stature they were giants in good truth.
Each looked to have the strength of two strong
men,
Each carried on his shoulder a huge club,
Knotted, and braced with iron. Crying to
them,
"For slaying yonder knight yourselves shall
die!"
The prince rushed on them, with his long spear
thrust
The nearer through the body that he died.
But ere he could pluck forth the lance again,
The other giant struck him with his club,
Crushing his side and shoulder, that his wounds,
Partially closed and stanch'd, opened anew
And from him all his blood began to flow.
Yet Geraint drew his sword and made attack,
And gave a blow so violent on the crown
Of the giant's head that bone and brain were
split,
And he fell dead. Then careless that he left

His lance still fixed within his first foe's breast,
Fainting from loss of blood, with one desire,
One only, to reach her he loved so well,
Geraint returned to Enid, where she sat
Between the dead young lovers, and her eyes
Brightened at seeing him, but when he came
Before her, he fell swooning from his horse.

And Enid gave a moaning, stifled cry ;
And flung herself upon him, calling him,
Entreating him to speak to her, but Geraint
Lay in so deep a swoon it seemed his death.
And then a numbing fear gripped Enid's heart ;
And though with nerveless fingers she undid
The buckles of his armour, and laid bare
The dreadful wounds, and from her hem tore
strips,
And wiped the blood away and bound his hurts,
Ever it seemed to her she did a thing
Which she had done before, so strong the sense
Had been upon her of a woe to come.
And when at last, his head upon her lap
Placing, she sat and gazed at his dear face,
She neither wept nor wailed ; her eyes were dry
And bright as with a fever, and her lips
Kept whispering just the words, " Dead ?
Dead, my love ?"
And dead because of me ? " And to and fro
Her body rocking slightly, thus she sat,

Whispering, "Dead? And dead because of me?"

So waned the afternoon, until the rays
Of the low sun wrought glory in the glade,
Kindling to gold the foliage. Then the dusk
Fell with a chill of autumn. Long before
Had Enid's palfrey and the lovers' steeds
Strayed far into the forest; but looking down
With sorrow almost human in its eyes,
Like faithullest of friends, Geraint's destrier
Remained by Enid quietly. And the dusk
Deepened to dark, but Enid knew it not —
Knew neither light nor change to dusk nor dark,
For to her all was blackness.

But behold,

Upon a sudden through the forest streamed
The smoky flare of torches, and the combes
And alleys of the wood rang with the shouts
And jests and oaths of fierce and lawless men.
Then upon steaming horses flecked with foam,
Into the hollow glade was poured the band
Of ruffians of the ruffian Earl Limours,
Returning from a foray, with the spoils
Of sackage bound about their saddle-bows.
And in the forefront, on a huge, black horse,
His shield an empty blackness, and his spear
Grim with the hue of carnage, rode Limours,
A man of mighty stature, with a cruel
And swarthy countenance.

At once the earl
Saw Enid and rode to her, with an oath
Saying, "What have we here? A woman lone,
With dead at either side, and in her lap,
One who will live not long in any case!"
Roughly to Enid then, "Does he live yet,
The one thou holdest?" Dully she replied,
As if another spake in place of her,
"I know not, but I fear that he is dead."
"Who is he?" asked Limours. "A knight and
prince."
"And thou — art thou his wife or lady-love?"
"Both, both," said Enid. Whereupon Li-
mours,
With a harsh laugh, gave ordering to his men:
"Quick! Make a sapling-litter for the man
And carry him to our hall, where we shall learn
Whether he live or die. And take his steed —
The horse at least may pay us for our pains.
As to the two dead bodies, let them lie."
And then again to Enid: "But as for thee,
I share with thee my charger. For know well
A fair face, even though bemarred with grief,
Is never slighted by the Earl Limours."

Which saying, he had Enid lifted up
And placed before him on the saddle-cloth;
While quickly his wild vassals used their brands
To cut two saplings upon which they laid

Branches crosswise, and on these placed Geraint,

His sword beside him. And in such array They journeyed to the stronghold of Limours.

And great and gaunt and menacing was the hall They entered, with a floor of naked stone, And walls of stone begrimed by smoke and age ; Hung with fantastic cobwebs etched in soot, Hung with old shields and helms, old spears and swords,

Eaten away with rust, and tattered flags Fretted about the blood-stains,— booty all Of ravagings in old years. A fire flamed high In a vast, blackened fireplace ; torches set In rusted iron burned fitfully ; down the room, Ranged in long rows, were tables and their banks Of bare, unfinished boards.

And upon these
The followers of Limours flung down the fruits
Of the day's foray — glittering, costly heaps :
Hauberks of silver mail, and helms and greaves
Inlaid with gold, and swords with jewelléd hilts ;
Much silver plate, beakers and cups of gold,
Hanaps adorned with gems ; and spurs and bits,
All of fine gold ; and piles of various coins ;
And surcoats of green satin, women's gowns
Of scarlet lined with minever, kirtles blue,

And mantles furred with ermine; while of rings,
Girdles and carcanets of twisted gold
And many gem-encrusted, such a sum
That onerous were the counting. Then the
earl

Made the apportionment, to every man
Gave what he deemed was rightful, silencing
Any half-muttered word of discontent
With curses and with blows of his mailed hand;
And that which was the largest share and best
He for himself reserved.

Then Prince Geraint,

Still in his swoon upon the leafy bier,
Limours caused to be placed upon a couch
In the center of the hall, and Enid sat
Beside him on a low bench, with her arms
Stretched over him, her cheek against his hand;
And neither did she weep nor did she wail.

And Limours doffed his armour, and his men
Did likewise, and a shout rose for the feast.
So entered kitchen-fellows, on huge trays
Bearing whole wild boars roasted, bullock's
flesh,
Bittern and other fowl; and casks of wine
Were rolled into the hall; the tables set
With trenchers and with flagons and with
cups —

A table-service of which some was wood,
And much was silver, ay, and part was gold.
And then in flaunting garments tricked with
jewels

Too many, and with jangling chains of gold,
A throng of women came into the hall,
The wantons of the earl and of his men.
And all sat down together to the feast,
And ate and drank, and presently the talk
Grew fast and boisterous, the jesting broad,
The laughter gross, and always some would
raise
Snatches of shameless songs.

But Earl Limours,

With scarce a taste of food or sip of wine,
Pushed cup and platter from him; moodily
And with a dangerous lowering of brows
Sat, with his eyes on Enid; and at last
He rose and went to her, and seized her arm,
And pulled her to her feet, and spake to her:

“ Why dost thou grieve for him? If he be dead,
Will thy dole give him life? And if he live,
It matters not — he were as dead to thee.
For I have set my heart on having thee,
And I *will* have thee, not by any man
Living or dead, be barred from my desire.

Why starest thou so? The change is good enough,—

God knows, all to thy vantaging. Thou hast seen

What riches one day brings me; I have lands
And vassals who obey me to the death.

And riches, lands and vassals shall be thine.

So! Droop no more! I have no taste for grief.

It is my pleasure that my women smile;
Remember that!”

And going to the heap
Of pillage that was his, he plucked a robe
Of scarlet damask from it, and returned
And thrust it towards her: “Go, and doff thy rags,

And clothe thee in this dress and come to me!”

But Enid, shaken from her apathy
By his discourteousness, stood white and straight

And resolute before him, answering him,
“My lord commanded me to wear this gown;
And till his will be changed, I wear it still.”

And the earl flushed with anger, and his brows
Drew to a savage scowl; yet with his wrath
Unwilling admiration he must mix
For her defiance of him, in his power

Completely as she was. Never before
Had he known woman who could dare so much.
A moment he stood speechless ; then he turned
And drew her to the table, forced her down
Into the seat by his, and pushed a plate
Of steaming meat before her and he said,
“ I will forbear this once ; but eat with me.”

But Enid said: “ Till yon pale man arise
And part the plate with me, I will not eat.”
Raging, Lamours replied: “ A fool art thou !
Yon man is dead already. What avail
To take a vow that can not be fulfilled ?
Is thy wit weak ? I warn thee, have a care,
Lest I be angered from my gentleness,
And teach thee what it means to disobey.
Once more will I forbear ; but drink with me.”

But Enid pushed the heavy cup of gold,
Studded with rubies, with a red wine brimmed,
From her and said, “ Till yon still man arise
And part the cup with me, I will not drink.”

Then in a crimson fury, with the veins
Knotting upon his forehead, the black earl
Sprang from the bench, and with a grip that
pained
Caught Enid by the shoulder, held her fast
At arm’s length, raised his hand, crying aloud,

“ As well may I be rough as gentle with thee ! ”
But when he made to strike, of his men one
Who had been born to nobler circumstance,
Remembering her he loved in that far youth,
Ere riot blasted him, arose and ran
And interposed himself before Limours,
Sheltering Enid. “ It were better, lord,”
He said, “ to use her gently. She is fair,
Womanly with a perfect womanhood.”

But the earl, answering not, drew back a step,
Snatched up the massy hanap, poised it high,
Hurled it with fatal certainty of aim,—
It struck the liegeman’s temple and he reeled,
Groped with unsteady hand, then with a sigh
Sank in the pool of spilt wine and of blood
From the cut oozing, writhed once, and was
still.

Then even that brutal fellowship was stirred
To a dull anger ’gainst the murderer ;
And dark looks were passed slowly down the
board,
And all at once the feast came to an end ;
And in the ghastly silence one who well
Had loved the slain man, sobbed — and caught
her breath
Suddenly in sharp fear, and tried to smile,
Finding Limours’ eyes on her. And Limours,

Feeling the gathering menace of his men,
Maddened the more, and as if demon-driven
He drew to Enid, saying, "Learnest thou well
How they who cross me fare! And as with him,
Why not with thee?" and struck her in the face
With heavy hand!

And not so much the blow
It was as the mind-desolating thought,
"He had not dared, saving my lord *is* dead!"
That forced a cry from Enid, loud and shrill,
Wailing and vibrant through the echoing hall,—
The cry of one for whom all things are done.

But in the black abysses of his swoon
Prince Geraint heard, and struggled towards
the cry;
Battled through sheer eternities, it seemed,
With seething, formless horrors, some that
mowed,
Some yelling voicelessly — an offspring all
Of consciousness returning — and at last
Leaped from the couch, and the great, lighted
hall
Burst on his vision and the savage earl,
And the dead man prone in the wine and blood,
And Enid trembling from the blow, and pale
As palest death. And Geraint seized his sword
And rushed upon Limours, and with one blow

Struck head from body, and all they that sat
About the board, upstarting, fled from him,
Their faces ashen at the sight they saw,
Shrieking, “It is the dead man!” And the hall
Cleared in a moment of all enemies.

And Geraint folded Enid in his arms,
Kissing her on the throat and lips and hair;
And clasped the face he loved in yearning hands,
And clasped her body in poor, faltering hands,
And knelt and pressed his cheek against her
gown,
Kissing the robe’s thin tatters, all the while
Whispering, “O Belovéd, what am I?
O dear my love, how have I treated thee!
O dear beyond all words, how dealt with thee!
Forgive, forgive! ”

But Enid saw alone
How shuddering fits of weakness mastered him,
How his hands quivered brokenly, and her fear
For him was such she could not say a word
Of love or any comforting — naught but this:
“Go, go, my lord! Go, ere they come again!
Geraint, go ere they slay thee! ”

Then he rose:
“Come, we shall go together;” and they passed
Into the courtyard, where Geraint’s destrier

Stood saddled still and bridled. And Geraint
Mounted and drew up Enid, and she sat
Behind him with her arms about his waist.
And none came forth to hinder their escape,
When from the grim hall of the grim Limours
Rapidly through the night they rode away ;
And a sweet wind was hurrying o'er the world,
And wreathed in wisp-like clouds the moon was
sheen.

And Geraint said : “ Belovéd, shall we ride
Unto a brighter world and fairer life,—
Ay, fairer for the weight of lifted woe ?
I love thee ; I have wronged thee ; all my vows —
To cherish thee with such exceeding care,
To prove me not unworthy of thy love —
I brake them all, in all am I forsown.
And yet forgive me, Enid, whom I love
So very, very well.” And tenderly
She forward bent and kissed him as they rode ;
And Love was come again to his high place,
And in two hearts was joyance at the last.

So they fared onward by a grassy way
Between two hawthorn-hedges, and the night
Was like a web of silver on the land.
But lo, before them, sharp against the sky
They saw the points of lances, heard the noise
Of an approaching host. Then Prince Geraint,

Checking his charger, said: “Who these may be,

I know not; but dismount, Enid, and hide
In yonder deepest shadow of the hedge,
Where they may not perceive thee.” But she wept

And clung to him in anguish: “O my love,
So weak and wounded, without lance or shield,
How wilt thou make a stand against these men?

Let me stay with thee and thy lot be mine!”

“Nay,” he replied, “I pray thee by our love,
Enid, to hide.” And lest he suffer more,
She did as he would have her.

Then behold,
Armed in full armour, with long spear in rest,
Upon a powerful, rushing steed, a knight
Forthissued from the host against Geraint.

And Enid saw, and seeing had such dole
As might not be contained, and she ran out
To meet the galloping steed, and wildly cried,
“O knight, eternal shame be thy reward
Slaying a man forwounded!” But the knight,
Reining his horse so sharply that it hurled
Back on its haunches, answered, “Do I see
Geraint’s fair lady?” “Ah, but thou?” she said —

And then the moonfire showed upon his shield
The argent lion of the Little King,

Guivret, their friend and ally.

And Guivret,

Lightly dismounting, knelt and kissed her hand,
Then ran to Prince Geraint, saying, " My lord,
If I had slain thee, grief had been my death.
I came to bring thee help if there was need.
For after that I saw thee ride away
This undertide, and went back to my towers,
Ever must I be thinking of thy wounds,
Thy lady's wondrous beauty, and the lands
Perilous of the evil Earl Limours.
I could not rest from thinking, and I rose
To call my thousand knights and men-at-
arms —"

" And wounded as thou wert," brake in Geraint,
" To bring to me the help I greatly need.

Ah, friend, *thine* oath was more than empty
words!"

" Lord," said the Little King, " I am thy man,
And love is there between us, as I hope.
And now I say again what I have said:
Come with me to my castle and be healed,
For grievous are thy hurts. And if not they
May move thee, then have pity on thy wife,
So worn, so dolour-stricken. For her sake
Come where she may have comfort. On the
morn

We celebrate a wedding in our hall;

Joyance and cheer and chime of marriage-bell
Will make the world grow winsomer to you
both."

But Enid, when she heard him, called to mind
The young dead lovers lying in the glade,
And understood and grieving told him all.
And King Guivret wept bitterly and he said:
" Cadoc of Tabriol, my sister's son,
Just issued from his squireship! Brave and
true,
A good knight he had proved. And sweet
Yglais,
His bride that should have been — so young and
fair!
And they are dead! The wedding-wine is
mulled,
The hall is strown for bridals. They are dead!
And we must toll the bells to other tune.
And yet, my lady and my lord Geraint,
Though mourning fills our chambers, will ye
come
And find repose and healing for your hurts?"
" Fair friend," replied Geraint, " we thank thee;
yea."

Then caused the king two litters to be made
Of tree-boughs, covered with soft grass and
silks,

And on the one placed Enid, and Geraint
Upon the other. And the morning-grey
Revealed to them the castle by the stream,
High-towered Penévríc, where in robes right rich
And all of luxury, they lodged full well ;
And where the sisters, skilled in surgery,
Used every art to cure the prince's wounds.

And such was their unfailing craft and care,
That when a month was ended, strong and well
And vigorous of manhood was Geraint.
Then joy returned to Enid, and with joy
Rose-red of cheek, and golden sheen of hair,
And in her eyes the shining of a light.
And happiness gave to her such a grace,
So wonder-working and so excellent
That where she was there all was beautiful —
Ay, that which had been never ; and all men,
Beholding her fair nobleness and charm,
Were minded to gaze long, lest when she pass
All beauteousness go with her. And Geraint
Had in his heart a love past any speech.

But naught of traitor was there in this love,
As had been in the old. From this should
spring
Not slothfulness, dishonourable ease,
Indifference to his duties as a prince,
A people's disaffection, the dark slime

Of slanders that ere long must change to truths,
But action, honour on the field of arms,
Fair duties fairly done, all knightlihood,
A people's reverence for a worthy lord,
And wide, yet wider fame. For in those days
Of health restored, when Enid and Geraint
Re-entered into that companionship
And unison of spirit which they prized
Above all other good, and which had been
So long denied them by their own distrust,
Misunderstandings, doubts and unshared griefs,
Then frankly each to other told a tale:
Enid, of her unwillingness to speak
And tell him how the people scoffed at him
As given up to luxury, and content;
Geraint, of his ignoble doubts of her,
Of how the evil words of Honolan
Had closed with hers so fatefully on that morn.
And then he said: "Yet, Enid, all the while
I knew that he had lied; and all the while
It was upon me I should cast me down
And cry forgiveness that I wronged thee so;
But such a storm of wrath and shame and pride
Possessed me that all gentlehood was stilled.
And, Enid, what a poor thing was my pride!
My pride, which took no reck of periling thee!
My pride, wherein was neither reasoning
Nor courtesy nor any knightliness!
It was my master; yet at best it was

Only the wilful passion of a child!
And well-nigh it brought ruin to us both."

But Enid, looking on him with clear eyes
A little grave with tenderness, replied:
"O knight of mine, the past is past indeed.
The Mansions of To-morrow are so fair!
Therein shall we dwell always, with us, Love,
Kinglier-souled that he is learn'd of Pain.
True lover and true knight, I love thee well!"

So with Guivret the Little they abode
A fortnight and a month, and found him frank,
And ever faultless in his courtesy.
But then they fell to longing for their home,
The pleasant land of Devon, where should be
A life the fairer for the lifted woe,
A love the greater that it had been tried,
Proved in the furnace-fires of stress and strife.
Wherefore they spake their purpose to Guivret;
And though for his own sake he much desired
Their tarriance still, of five score knights he
formed
A retinue befitting, and with such train
Geraint and Enid rode to their own realm.

And heart-deep was the welcome which they had
From Erbin who had feared that they were dead,
And when they came before him, wept with joy.

And wide rejoicing made he in his court.
Then, though at Enid's gentle word, Geraint
Spared to Sir Honolan his evil life,
He banished him to shores beyond the seas.

And in the years that followed all was well.
Never did Prince Geraint again decline
To aught that was unworthy; steadfast, brave,
Tireless in quest of honour, a true knight
He was in all ways knightly, and the tongues
Which once had scoffed, spake nothing but his
praise,
And praise of her with whom he had such love,
Enid, so very fair and very leal.
And when the good King Erbin was no more,
Unto Geraint and Enid passed the crown
Of Devon, and a king and queen were they,
To Arthur tributary, but paramount
In their own land. And king and queen they
lived
And loved, until transformed to deathless names.

AFTERWORD

So hath the fair old history an end.
And yet, I pray you, gentles, linger still
And hear the song which folk say Alarin
Made when he dwelt in Faerie. For of him,
The story goes that Enid and Geraint
Had been in Devon at King Erbin's call
Hardly a twelvemonth, when from Arthur's court
He went away, and no man saw him more;
And wise folk say he sought, and seeking found,
The Country of the Clearness, Faeryland.

And the chief harper to the faery-king
He was, and ware the potent crown of joy;
Beheld the walls of beryl and the towers
Of amethyst and loadstone, heard the splash
Of waters Avalonian where the cups
Of lilies mould a margin to their flow,
And saw the stars wet with the faery sea.

And yet he made a small song, even this:

“ Here, to suspended music, the slow hours
 Turn neither east nor west their golden ball;
And here, by wind-blown fountains, are the flowers
 Which never fall.

“ Ah, but what profit of the sovran day?
 What profit of this immortality,
If still remembrance and its fret must fray
 Unceasingly?

“ Here is the light whose sumless levels foam
 Like billows crescent to a crystal strand —
Serenities celestial — and they dome
 A changeless land.

“ Ah, but what comfort in such clarity?
 What soul in such placidity of grace? —
Ah, but the light which never lived for me
 Upon *her* face!”















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